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She reigned from 1837 to 1901, dominating print media in what was then the new age of photography. Today, our fascination with Queen Victoria shows no sign of waning. Hers was a long reign that witnessed dramatic changes in politics, society and industry, as well as the rise of the British empire. We remain intrigued by Victoria's character and its contradictions: she was at once austere but romantic; feisty yet subservient; and a strong woman but one who fell apart at the death of her beloved Albert. Perhaps that's why there are so many contradictions in historians' understanding of the queen, something we explore in this special edition.

We look at Victoria's **family and upbringing**, and the factors that shaped the young princess, including new research showing evidence of a **childhood that was surprisingly happy**. We also reassess Victoria's famously loving marriage, to explore the **stresses that affected the royal couple** as well as examining their parenting styles.

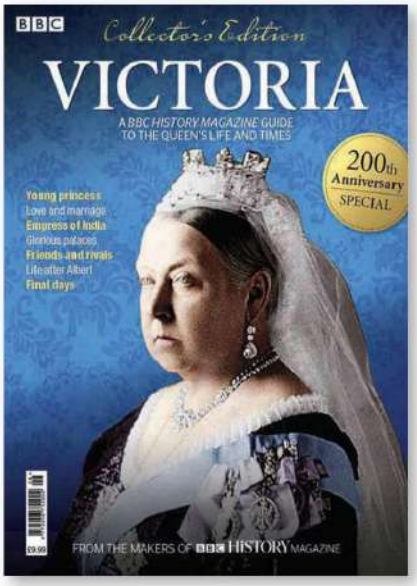
We'll take a closer look at the queen's relationships with the most important **prime ministers of her reign** as well as with some of **Europe's powerful leaders**, many of whom she was related to.

We'll discover how Victoria's **life and reign have been portrayed on film** and TV. Plus, we examine her personality – her **healthy appetite for food, enthusiasm for sex**, as well as some of the **places she visited** during her 63-year reign.

This collector's edition compiles and updates articles that have appeared previously in *BBC History Magazine* and on our website *historyextra.com*, along with several new articles written specially for this edition. I hope you enjoy it.



Charlotte Hodgman
Editor



"Two hundred years on from her birth the original global celebrity, and the goings on of her enormous family, continue to intrigue us"

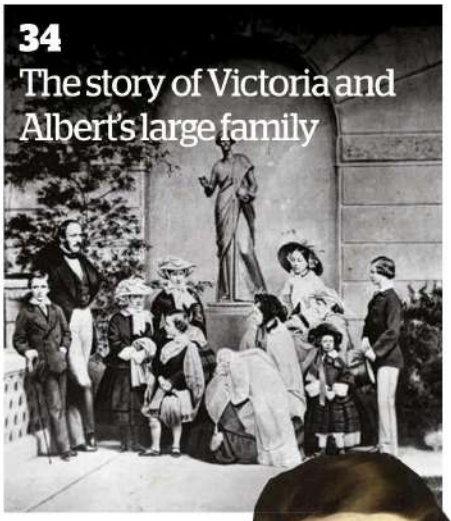
Historian and TV presenter LUCY WORSLEY discusses our enduring fascination with Queen Victoria on page 114

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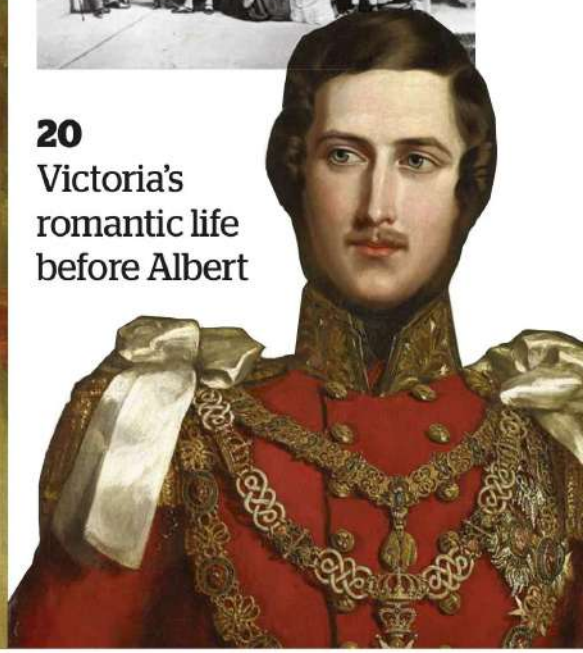
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Queen Victoria

Ellie Cawthorne charts the pivotal milestones in the life of the extraordinary queen whose reign redefined the monarchy for the modern age

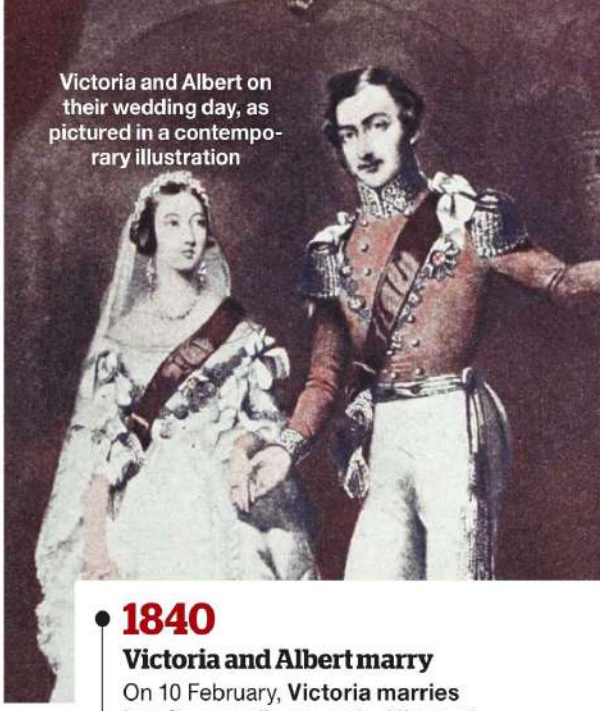


Black silk shoes worn by Victoria in her infancy, c1819–20

1819

Victoria is born

Following **Victoria's birth at Kensington Palace on 24 May**, her father (who would die just 8 months later) describes her as "plump as a partridge… more of a pocket Hercules than a pocket Venus". The christening is low-key; her uncle George, the Prince Regent, allows only a handful of people to attend. At the time, **Victoria is fifth in line to the throne**; no one expects her to become queen, so she is given an unusual name for a royal: Alexandrina Victoria.



Victoria and Albert on their wedding day, as pictured in a contemporary illustration

1838

A spectacular coronation is staged

Victoria is crowned in a **five-hour ceremony at Westminster Abbey** on 28 June. An estimated 400,000 visitors travel to London to celebrate the coronation, which is followed by a royal banquet and fireworks.

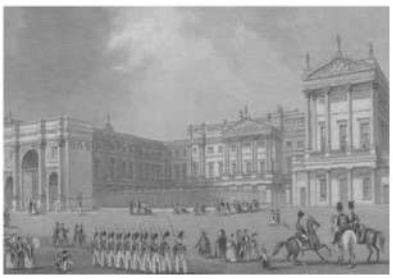


1840

Victoria and Albert marry

On 10 February, **Victoria marries her German first cousin Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha** in St James's Palace chapel, having proposed to him a year earlier – royal tradition dictating that no one can propose to a reigning monarch. At the wedding ceremony, 12 bridesmaids hold Victoria's 5.5-metre-long train; she wears white, beginning an enduring custom. The nation erupts into energetic celebration: the queen records that she "never saw such crowds of people… they cheered most enthusiastically".

1840



An engraving of Buckingham Palace made c1837, the year of Victoria's accession to the throne

1837

Victoria becomes queen

At 6am on 20 June, Victoria is woken to be informed that, following **the death of her uncle, King William IV**, she is now queen of England. The 18-year-old begins her new life as monarch by moving from her childhood home at Kensington to Buckingham Palace, in part to escape from the controlling influence of her mother and Sir John Conroy, her mother's manipulative advisor.

1839

The 'bedchamber crisis' erupts

The **inexperienced queen gets into hot water for meddling in political matters**, in an episode known as the 'bedchamber crisis'. Having been criticised for her over-reliance on the Whig prime minister Lord Melbourne, Victoria is accused of being unconstitutional when she appoints the majority of her ladies-in-waiting according to Melbourne's advice. The situation is defused after her marriage by Prince Albert, who arranges for some of these ladies to resign.



William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne, Victoria's trusted first prime minister

1840

The royal couple start a family

Just over nine months after their wedding, **Victoria and Albert's first child, Princess Victoria – known as Vicky – is born** at Buckingham Palace on 21 November. A male heir arrives less than a year later, when the **queen gives birth to Albert Edward, Prince of Wales**, known to the family as 'Bertie'. Despite Victoria's hatred of pregnancy and childbirth, she and Albert produce a total of nine children – four boys and five girls (pictured below).



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1842

The queen escapes death... twice

On 29 May, would-be assassin John Francis – "a little, swarthy, ill-looking rascal", according to Prince Albert – **aims his pistol at the queen** as she returns to Buckingham Palace after Sunday service at St James's Palace. The weapon fails to fire, and Francis escapes into the crowd. The following day he returns for **a second attempt at the queen's life**, this time firing his pistol but missing his intended victim. Captured by police, Francis is sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered; Victoria herself has the punishment commuted to transportation. She survives five more assassination attempts during her reign.


Most Daring Attempt To
ASSASSINATE THE QUEEN
By John Francis

A broadside of 1842 describes the attempted assassination of Queen Victoria by John Francis, who was arrested and transported



Victoria and Albert are received by Emperor Napoleon III in France

1855

Victoria visits France

In a move designed to heal the longstanding historical rift between Britain and France, in August **Victoria and Albert undertake a state visit to Emperor Napoleon III** – including a trip to Paris, the first time a British monarch had visited the French capital in over 400 years. They are also guests of honour at a lavish ball in Versailles.

1857

Victoria's last child is born

In April 1857, aged nearly 38, **Victoria gives birth to her ninth and last child, Princess Beatrice**, on whom both parents dote. After Albert's death four years later, Beatrice is a source of comfort and support to her mother until the princess's marriage in 1885 – a union initially forbidden by the widowed queen.

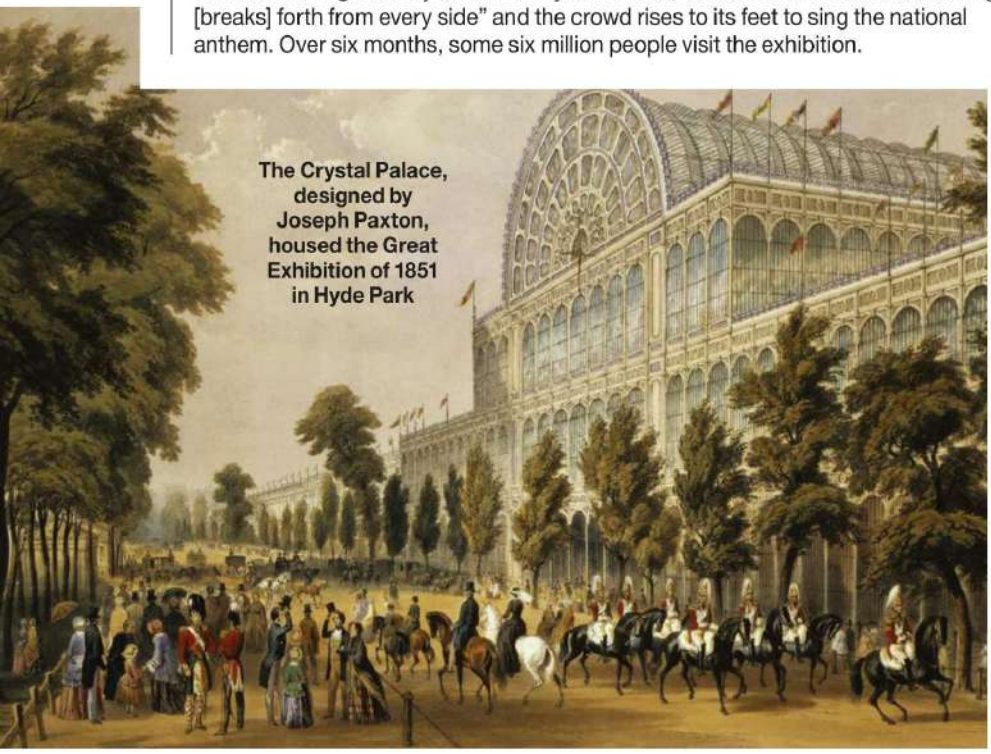
Victoria and her youngest child, Beatrice, pictured in c1860



1851

The monarch opens the Great Exhibition

On 1 May, the royal couple arrive in Hyde Park to open the Great Exhibition – devised by Albert, it is **the world's first international display of design and manufacturing**. As they enter the Crystal Palace, "a burst of enthusiastic cheering [breaks] forth from every side" and the crowd rises to its feet to sing the national anthem. Over six months, some six million people visit the exhibition.



The Crystal Palace, designed by Joseph Paxton, housed the Great Exhibition of 1851 in Hyde Park

1857

Albert becomes Prince Consort

Seventeen years after his marriage to Victoria, Albert is formally recognised by the nation and **given the title of Prince Consort**. He hadn't enjoyed great popularity with the British public, and his lack of constitutional position had been a longstanding source of frustration.

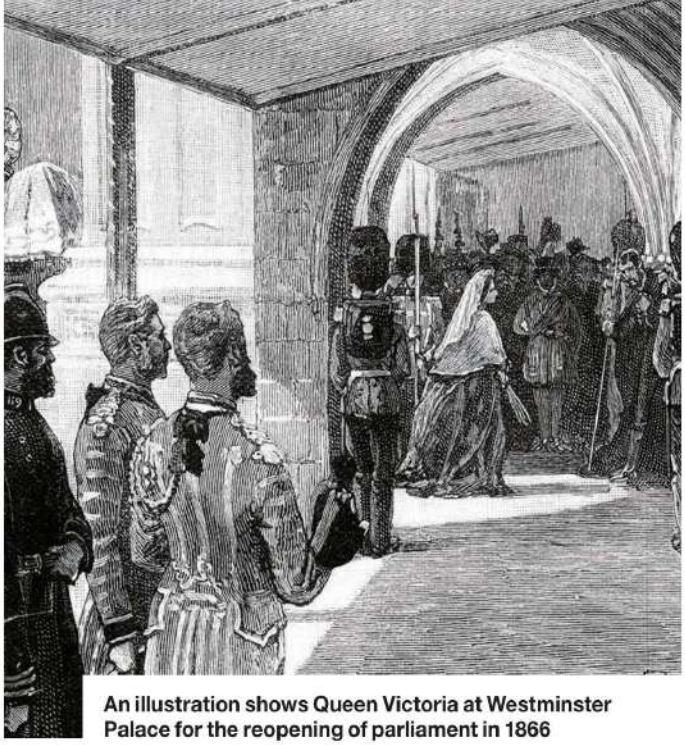


A portrait of Albert painted in c1859, two years after he was given the title of Prince Consort

Timeline



Queen Victoria's mother, the Duchess of Kent, in 1856, aged around 70



An illustration shows Queen Victoria at Westminster Palace for the reopening of parliament in 1866



The gravestone of Victoria's devoted servant John Brown, near Balmoral

1861
Victoria's mother dies

After years of strained relations, prompted by Albert, Victoria reconciles with her mother, the Duchess of Kent, known as Victoire. The latter's death, all too soon afterwards on 16 March 1861, devastates Victoria.

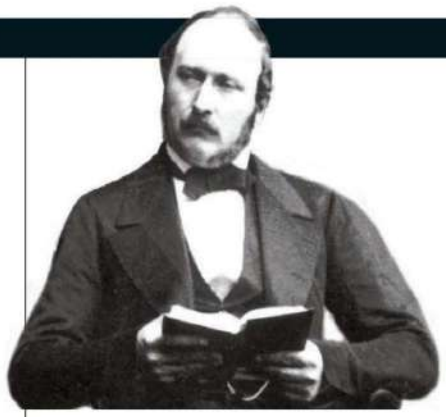
1866
Victoria re-emerges for a public appearance

Following the death of her beloved Albert, Victoria slumps into an extended mourning and refuses to make any public appearances. In the absence of a royal figure, a republican movement grows, and in 1866 Victoria is eventually persuaded to act. **In her first official public appearance in five years, she opens parliament.** Though reluctant to resume her public role, urged by her family and prime minister Benjamin Disraeli she later gradually resumes her queenly duties.

1883
John Brown dies

Victoria's **Highland servant and friend dies**, aged 56. Her family disapproved of their closeness, but Victoria wrote fondly of their "warm and loving" friendship.

1860 **1880**



Queen Victoria's beloved husband Prince Albert, pictured in 1860, less than two years before his death

1861
Prince Albert dies

Victoria suffers a shattering loss. After visiting their son Bertie to try to persuade him to end a scandalous affair, Albert catches a chill. Soon after, on 14 December, **he dies unexpectedly, aged just 42.** Unable to control her grief at losing her beloved husband, friend and advisor, the queen withdraws from public life. **She never remarries, and continues to wear mourning dress** right up until her own death almost 40 years later.

1876
The queen becomes an empress

After pressure from Victoria on prime minister Benjamin Disraeli, **she is pronounced Empress of India** on 1 May 1876, a title inaugurated at the Delhi Durbar on 1 January 1877. Over the course of her long reign, Victoria witnesses a huge expansion of the British empire. The monarchy is seen as a focal point for imperial pride, and the queen's image is spread across the globe. By the time she dies, the **British empire is the largest the world has ever known**, encompassing a quarter of the world's entire population.



A souvenir portrait of Queen Victoria, produced c1887, shows her as Empress of India, a title she took from 1876

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Victoria's carriage arrives at St Paul's Cathedral during diamond jubilee celebrations in 1897

1897

Victoria's diamond jubilee lights up the empire

Street parties, parades, fireworks and cricket games across the country celebrate Victoria's diamond jubilee (marking 60 years on the throne). **Some 300,000 of Britain's poor are treated to a special jubilee dinner**, while in India 19,000 prisoners are pardoned. During a royal procession to St Paul's Cathedral, Victoria is reportedly so overwhelmed by the cheering crowds that she bursts into tears.

1900

1887

The queen celebrates her golden jubilee

Decades after her damaging retreat from public life following Albert's death, Victoria is coaxed back into the limelight. A show-stopping crowd-pleaser, **her golden jubilee is intended to restore the popularity of the 'widow of Windsor'**. Processions and military displays buzz with patriotic pomp, and countless commemorative souvenirs are produced for the enthusiastic populace.



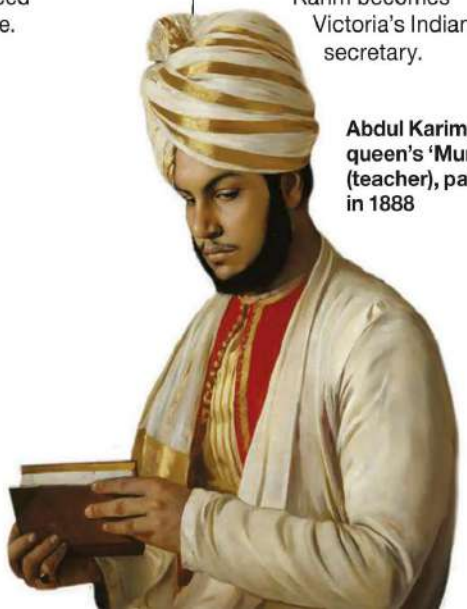
A ceramic milk jug, one of many souvenirs produced for the queen's golden jubilee

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1894

Abdul Karim becomes Indian secretary

One of two Indians serving in the queen's household during her Golden Jubilee celebrations, **Karim – born in Agra in c1862 – soon becomes a favourite with Victoria, teaching her Hindustani** (Urdu) and rising within the royal household. Though others raise concerns about his influence over the queen, Karim becomes Victoria's Indian secretary.



Abdul Karim, the queen's 'Munshi' (teacher), painted in 1888



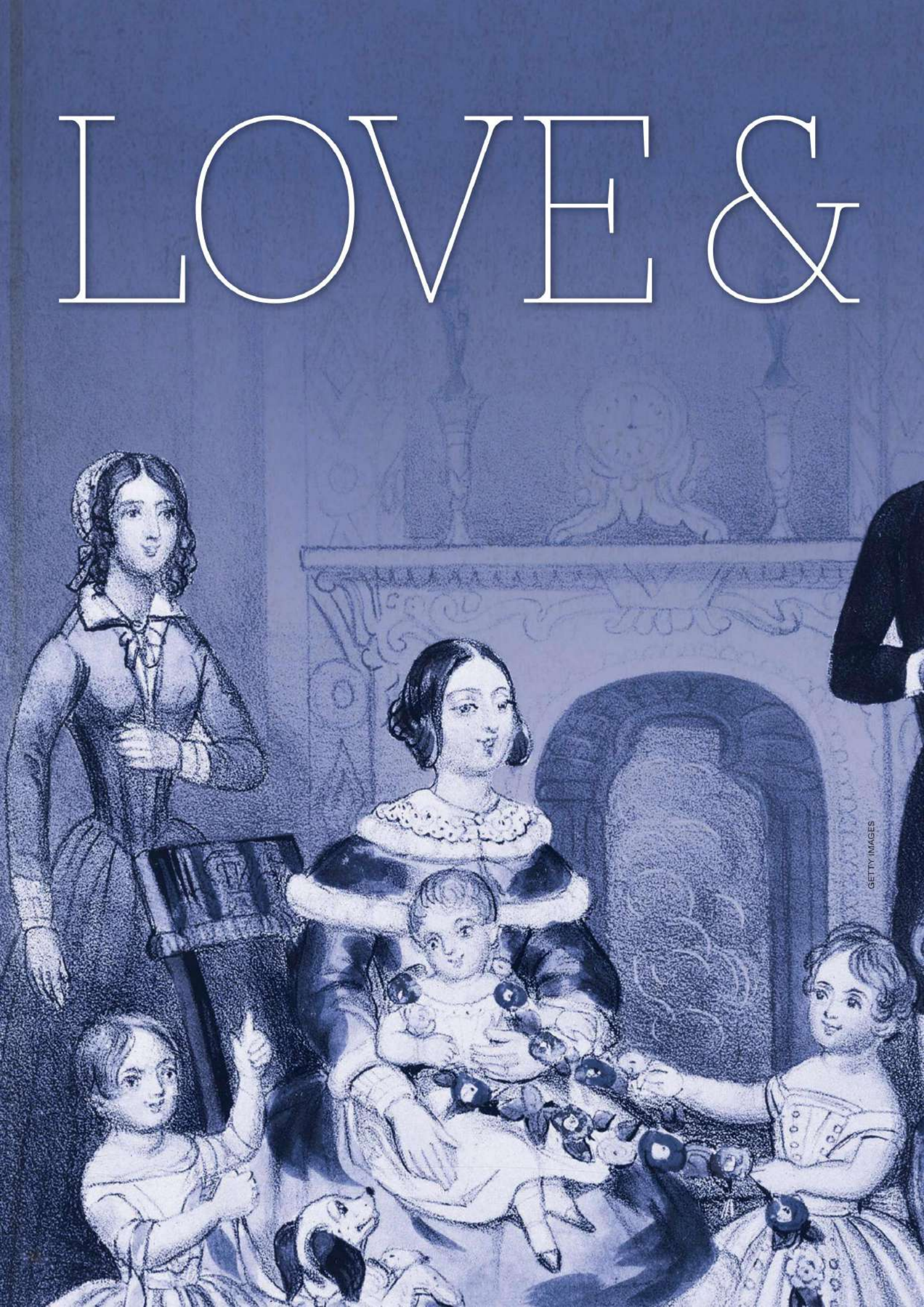
A picture from a memorial card issued shortly after Victoria's death in January 1901

1901

Victoria dies

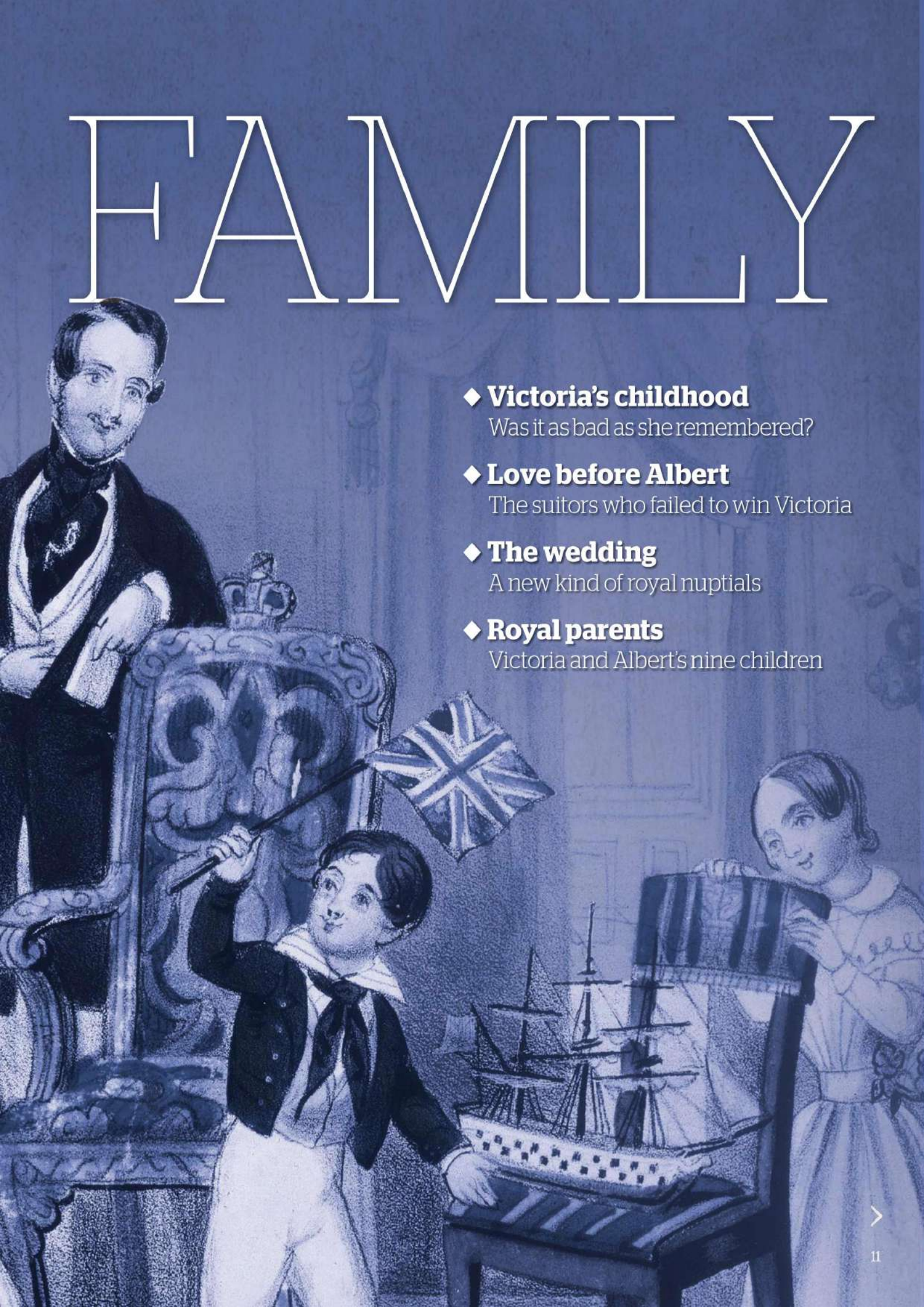
After a record-breaking 63 years on the throne, on 22 January **the 81-year-old queen dies at Osborne House** on the Isle of Wight. Silent crowds line the streets of London for the grand funeral procession, after which Victoria is buried beside Albert in the royal mausoleum at Frogmore in Windsor. In accordance with her requests, Albert's dressing gown and a plaster cast of his hand are placed in her coffin. H

LOVE &



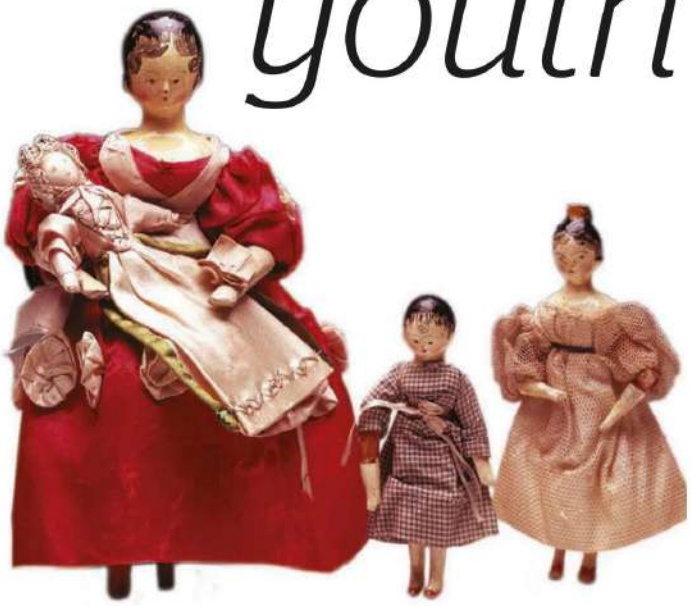
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FAMILY



- **Victoria's childhood**
  Was it as bad as she remembered?
- **Love before Albert**
  The suitors who failed to win Victoria
- **The wedding**
  A new kind of royal nuptials
- **Royal parents**
  Victoria and Albert's nine children

Victoria's misremembered youth



A selection of Victoria's wooden dolls – she had a collection of more than 130. Despite her later recollections, she was rather spoiled as a child

Victoria's early years were tainted by loneliness and misery – or so the queen came to believe in her later years. Yet, as **Tracy Borman** reveals, new research suggests a happy childhood filled with indulgence and love



Victoria, aged two, with her mother, the Duchess of Kent, who wrote to the princess in 1828: "Believe me... that nobody in this world can love you better"

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Family tree

Victoria was born fifth in line to the throne but, as seen here, is responsible for today's royal family



George III 1738-1820 = **Charlotte Sophia of Mecklenburg-Strelitz** 1744-1818

- **Frederick** Duke of York 1763-1827
- **William IV** 1765-1837 = **Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen** 1792-1849
  - **Charlotte** b & d 1819
  - **Elizabeth** 1820-21
- **George IV** 1762-1830 = **Caroline** 1768-1821
  - **Charlotte** 1796-1817
- **Edward** Duke of Kent 1767-1820 = **Victoria of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld (Victoire)** 1786-1861





  - **Victoria** 1819-1901 = **Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha** 1819-61





    - **Victoria** Princess Royal 1840-1901



    - **Edward VII** 1841-1910 = **Alexandra of Denmark** 1844-1925



      - **Albert Victor** Duke of Clarence 1864-92



      - **George V** 1865-1936 = **Mary of Teck** 1867-1953



        - **Edward VIII** 1894-1972 (abdicated 1936) = **Wallis Simpson** 1896-1986





        - **George VI** 1895-1952



          - **Elizabeth** 1926- = **Philip** Duke of Edinburgh 1921-





          - **Margaret** 1930-2002



        - **Elizabeth** Bowes-Lyon 1900-2002



        - **Mary** Princess Royal 1897-1965
        - **Henry** Duke of Gloucester 1900-74
        - **George** Duke of Kent 1902-42
        - **John** 1905-19
      - **Louise** Princess Royal 1867-1931
      - **Victoria** 1868-1935
      - **Maud** 1869-1938
      - **Alexander John** b & d 1871
    - **Alice** 1843-78
    - **Alfred** Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha 1844-1900
    - **Helena** 1846-1923
    - **Louise** 1848-1939
    - **Arthur** Duke of Connaught 1850-1942
    - **Leopold** Duke of Albany 1853-84
    - **Beatrice** 1857-1944
- **Ernest** Duke of Cumberland, King of Hanover 1771-1851 = **Frederica of Mecklenburg-Strelitz** 1778-1841
  - **George** King of Hanover 1819-78
- **Augustus** Duke of Sussex 1773-1843
- **Adolphus** Duke of Cambridge 1774-1850 = **Augusta of Hesse-Cassel** 1797-1889
  - **George** Duke of Cambridge 1819-1904
  - **Augusta** 1822-1916
  - **Mary Adelaide** 1833-97
- **Six daughters** Charlotte Augusta Sophia Elizabeth Mary Sophia Amelia

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Queen Victoria had a strong tendency to dwell on the past. Her journal and correspondence record her frequent forays into the events of her youth. Even her physical appearance during the last decades of her life betrayed her inclination to focus on earlier days. Her uniform of black silk dresses trimmed with mourning crepe, black silk stockings, black shoes and black-embroidered handkerchiefs reminded everyone that Prince Albert's death in 1861 had suspended some part of her psyche in time. She marked special occasions with visual references to happier days. On her wedding anniversary each year, and during the Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 1897, she laid over her black dress the vast overskirt of Honiton lace she wore on her wedding day in 1840.

The queen's memories of her childhood returned to her again and again. She collected and preserved many artefacts relating to her days as a young princess, including thousands of letters from friends and family. She also retained exercise books from her lessons, concert programmes, dolls and jewellery, among many other items. Some of these objects she treated almost as relics; for example, she selected the heart-shaped gold locket containing locks of her parents' hair – a first birthday present – to form part of a poignant display of mementoes in the room in which Prince Albert died at Windsor.

Having meticulously sifted through and ruminated upon all of this material, Victoria arrived at the conclusion that her childhood had been unhappy. She promoted this position through her journals, through letters she wrote to friends and family, and through conversations with close advisors such as her first prime minister, Lord Melbourne. Again and again, she would remark upon the "painful and disagreeable scenes" that she had endured while growing up at Kensington Palace.

However, recent research has challenged that view. Deirdre Murphy, senior curator at Kensington Palace for 15 years, spent much of that time examining Victoria's voluminous correspondence, diaries, newspapers and the like, as well as her clothes, jewels and personal possessions. Piecing together research for a new study of the queen's childhood, Murphy found that a radically different picture emerged, quite at odds with the one that Victoria herself liked to present to the world. The evidence Murphy unearthed before her untimely death last year comprises some of the key findings in her recent book, *The Young Victoria*.



The infant Victoria aged just one, painted by Anthony Stewart in 1820

Victoria's birth was a result of **the 'baby race' between the feckless brothers of George**, the prince regent, whose only child tragically died in childbirth

Far from being a lonely, miserable young girl at the whim of her mother, the Duchess of Kent, and her rapacious favourite John Conroy, Deirdre's findings suggest that for much of her childhood Victoria was a rather spoilt, headstrong child who led her tutors a merry dance and spent many happy hours riding around Kensington Gardens, going to the ballet and enjoying long seaside holidays.

'Drina' arrives

Victoria was born at Kensington Palace on 24 May 1819. Her birth was a result of what has been dubbed the 'baby race' between the feckless brothers of George, the prince regent, whose only child, Charlotte, had tragically died after giving birth two years earlier. Prince Edward, Duke of Kent, was the fourth son of George III and, like his brothers, had been content to retain mistresses rather than marry. But the prospect of fathering an heir to the throne inspired him to take a bride at last: Marie Luise Victoria, known as Victoire, Dowager Princess of Leiningen, the sister of Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg. They were wed in Coburg in May 1818, and in March the following year they set out for England so that the (by then heavily pregnant) duchess could give birth at Kensington.

Victoria was doted upon from the start. The German physician and statesman Baron Stockmar enthused that the baby was "a pretty little princess, plump as a partridge". To her father, she was a "pocket Hercules... healthy, strong and beautiful". The tiny princess's wilful nature soon became evident, though: on Victoria's first outing, her mother reported that her "little mouse" had been "so unmanageable I nearly cried". On another occasion, Victoire confided to a friend that her daughter was "a greater darling than ever, but… beginning to show symptoms of wanting to get her own little way".

The princess was named Alexandrina Victoria; at first, the family called her 'Drina' and, though her mother tried out numerous pet names, sometimes using the German diminutive *Vickelchen*, within a couple of years she came to be known as Victoria.

In her early months, Victoria was surrounded by love and luxury. Her parents adored her, and she had a household of servants to attend to her every need. But everything changed with the sudden death of her father in January 1820, who had caught a fatal chill while staying in Sidmouth. His devastated widow found comfort in their infant daughter. "I have just been putting dear, sweet little *Vickelchen* to bed", she wrote to a friend. "God has indeed been good in letting me have such a treasure."

Living at Kensington, Victoria and her mother found that their circumstances were straitened because of the debts that the late duke had accumulated. The Duchess of Kent's poor command of English added to her struggles and impeded her relationships with people who might have had the power to help her. This left her ever more dependent on the late duke's equerry, John Conroy, upon whom she increasingly relied to run her household.

Financial worries did not stop the duchess from lavishing expensive gifts on

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Rather than being cooped up in Kensington Palace, as she later claimed, Victoria often enjoyed **seaside holidays, carriage rides and Punch and Judy shows**

her young daughter. For Victoria's first birthday, she received a heart-shaped gold locket containing a lock each of her mother's and father's hair. It is engraved 'present from her mother for her beloved Victoria on the first anniversary of her birthday 24 May 1820'. The duchess also presented her daughter with a tiny ring decorated with emeralds and a ruby. Many more gifts followed over the years, and the young princess became rather spoilt.

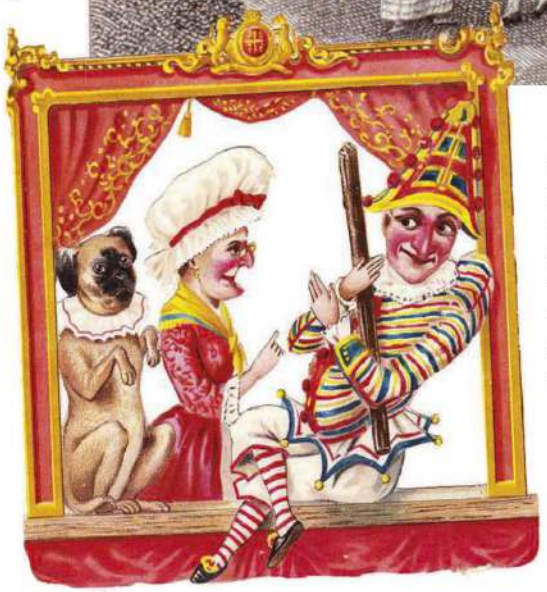
Indulged by family

Contrary to Victoria's later reminiscences, she did not lack company. Her half-sister Feodore, one of two children resulting from the Duchess of Kent's first marriage, lived with her at Kensington. The duchess also received regular visits from her brother Prince Leopold, as well as the Duke and Duchess of Clarence, Princess Augusta Sophia (Victoria's aunt, George IV's sister) and other family members.

The duchess and her two daughters also made regular visits to Prince Leopold's home at Claremont in Surrey, sometimes staying for a month at a time when he was in residence. Victoria's indulgent uncle paid for his niece's yearly holidays at the seaside. She also won the affection of another uncle, Prince Frederick, Duke of York, and often visited him at his newly built palace, Stafford (now Lancaster) House. As well as giving her a donkey, he arranged Punch and Judy shows for her in his garden.

Rather than being cooped up in Kensington Palace, as she later claimed, Victoria often enjoyed carriage rides around the park. "The Princess Alexandrina rides out daily in Kensington Gardens," reported the *Morning Chronicle* in September 1820, continuing: "Her Royal Highness is a remarkably fine child; she very much resembles her late father." Victoria was sometimes spotted riding a donkey that had been a gift from her uncle, the Duke of York. One contemporary recalled how: "The infant princess... skipped along between her mother and [half-]sister, the Princess Feodore, holding a hand of each." In summer, Victoria loved to spend time in the gardens with her rake and fork, collecting hay and placing it in her cart, continuing to play as an audience gathered to watch.















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As Victoria approached her fourth birthday, her mother turned her attention to her daughter's education. The Reverend George Davys, a liberal evangelical clergyman and fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, was appointed principal master. He was introduced to the duchess by Conroy, and had spent some time helping her improve her English. A mild, patient and kind man, Davys was an ideal foil to the spirited young princess, whom he attended for the first time on 6 April 1823.

When she arrived for her first lessons, Victoria found a note from her mother

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
Kensington Palace, c1823 – Victoria enjoyed carriage rides around her home; the Duke of Kent, Victoria's father, who died in 1820 when she was still a baby; John Conroy, who ran the household at Kensington and was loathed by Victoria; Victoria's half-sister Feodore; the Reverend George Davys, who tutored to the young princess until she took the throne; a late-Victorian picture of a Punch and Judy show, as staged for Victoria during visits to her uncle Frederick, Duke of York



Victoria, painted in 1830 at the age of 11 by Richard Westall, who had been appointed her drawing master four years earlier

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waiting for her on the schoolroom table. "My dear little Girl," it began, "I hope you will be very attentive in your repetition and think with what great pleasure it gives to your Mamma to witness your progress in learning and good behaviour. God bless you, dearest child. Ever your very affectionate Mother, Victoria." The duchess was so anxious for her daughter to perform well with her new master that she resorted to bribery, Davys recorded in his journal. He noted, however, that "the Princess asked for the reward before she began the lesson".

Victoria did not prove a willing student. Just after her fourth birthday, Davys wrote that she "improves in reading, but is still not fond of keeping her eyes long together on the book". He also observed that she had developed the German habit of sighing and exclaiming "So!" (pronounced "*Zo!*") This was something her mother – with an eye to the future – was anxious to eradicate. As heir to the throne, Victoria must be seen to be entirely English in her speech and habits.

Benchmark companion

Until the age of five, Victoria was principally under the care of her nurse, Mrs Brock, whom she called 'Boppy'. But in 1824, Louise Lehzen was appointed her governess. The daughter of a village clergyman from Lagenhagen, near Hanover, Lehzen was 40 when she took up her new position. A rather stern woman, she was nevertheless devoted to her new charge. "She never for the thirteen years she was governess to Princess Victoria once left her," Victoria herself later recalled. "The Princess was her only object and her only thought."

Victoria was a petted, spoilt and naughty youngest child whose behaviour contrasted sharply with that of her half-sister Feodore. By the age of 12, she had become so ungovernable that Lehzen decided to introduce a Good Behaviour Book. Responsibility for completing this was given to Victoria, who was obliged to record her conduct every morning and afternoon.

In one entry she had been "very thoughtless"; two days later, she was "very naughty". By the end of the week, she was mainly good, although momentarily "very impertinent". In August 1832, during a visit to Beaumaris Castle in Wales, Victoria was obliged to record that she was "very very very terribly NAUGHTY", underlining 'very' three times and 'naughty' four. Another such incident flared up the following month: on the afternoon of 24 September, the princess noted that she was "VERY VERY VERY VERY HORRIBLY NAUGHTY!!!!!", underlining each word four times.





Baroness Louise Lehzen, Victoria's devoted governess, painted c1842 (above) and sketched by the young princess c1835 (below)

Lehzen's unwavering devotion became the benchmark by which Victoria would **measure all of her companions throughout her long life**

Lehzen's unstinting efforts and unwavering devotion became the benchmark by which Victoria would measure all of her companions throughout her long life. "She had devoted her life to me, from my fifth to my eighteenth year, with the most wonderful self-abnegation, never even taking one day's leave!" Victoria later recalled. "I adored her, though I also feared her."

Upon the death of George IV in 1830, his next surviving brother ascended the throne as William IV. The new king had no surviving legitimate children, so Victoria was heir presumptive. During the years that followed, her mother and Conroy tightened their control of her upbringing in order to shape her into a future queen. Under the new regime, which became known as the Kensington System, Victoria was never allowed to be alone. If a visitor for her arrived at the palace, a third party had to be present. Her safety was paramount: she never even walked down the stairs without holding an adult's hand.

Although Victoria's journals attest to the fact that she was still able to have fun on occasion – visits to the theatre, regular holidays, an ever-expanding collection of dolls and pets – these years overshadowed what had otherwise been a blissfully happy upbringing.

Towards the end of her life, the memories to which Victoria clung were those of a "melancholy childhood". As well as the despised Kensington System, her grief at the loss of mother, her half-sister Feodore and, above all, of her beloved Albert clouded her view. Yet, as the new book by Deirdre Murphy reveals, a detailed re-examination of the numerous letters, journal entries, personal mementos and other contemporary sources paints a very different picture. Perhaps now, 200 years after Victoria's birth at Kensington Palace, it is time to accept an alternative narrative of the childhood that shaped her into one of our most celebrated monarchs. H

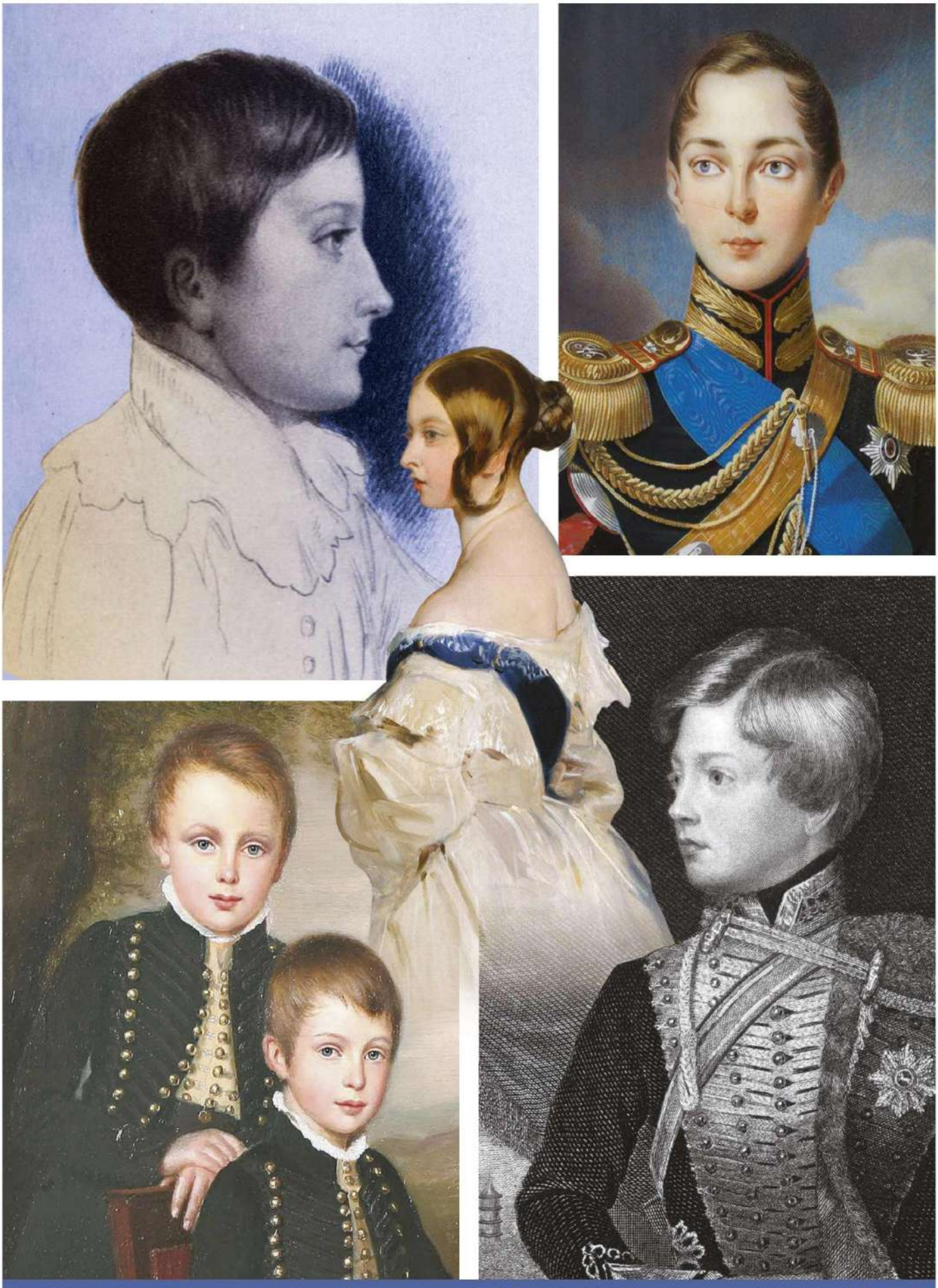
Tracy Borman is a historian, author, and joint chief curator of Historic Royal Palaces

DISCOVER MORE

BOOK

▶ **The Young Victoria** by Deirdre Murphy (Yale University Press, May 2019)

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: **A succession of suitors were presented to Queen Victoria (pictured, centre, in 1839) from her early teens, yet none of them proved acceptable – initially, at least. On first meeting Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, her future husband, there was no spark; Grand Duke Alexander Nikolaevich of Russia was charming, but a match was politically impossible; she didn't warm to her cousin, George of Cumberland; and she found princes William and Alexander of Orange too plain and too 'Dutch' looking**

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Love before Albert

YOUNG VICTORIA'S SUITORS

Victoria's devotion to her beloved husband Prince Albert famously endured for over 60 years. But, as **Helen Rappaport** reveals, he was only the last of a succession of men who tried to win Victoria's hand during her younger years

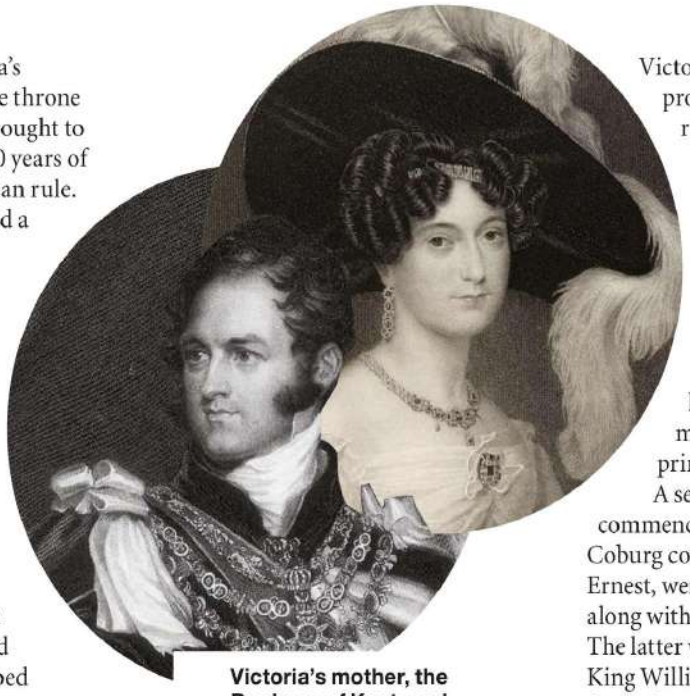
Princess Victoria's accession to the throne in June 1837 brought to a close over 120 years of male Hanoverian rule. Britain now had a young, pretty, virginal and untainted queen, just 18 years old. The press lauded her beauty, her precocious wisdom, her goodness and her self-possession in an outburst of 'reginamania' that swept Britain. In response, a mass of letters, some of them declaring passionate love and proposals of marriage, began pouring in from a succession of stalkers, admirers and would-be husbands who were dubbed 'The Queen's Lovers' by the press.

One of the first, Captain John Goode – whom the press described as labouring under the delusion that he was one day destined to possess Her Majesty's hand – had begun stalking Victoria when she was still living at Kensington Palace, and even followed her on holiday to Ramsgate and Hastings. On numerous occasions he was found hanging around outside Kensington Palace "inquiring at the grand entrance the state of the Queen's health, and endeavouring to get in, for the purpose of writing his name in the visiting book".

Having been escorted out of Kensington Gardens, Goode repeatedly made his way back in, with the hope of catching sight of Victoria. Whenever her carriage emerged through the gates, he would follow in his own phaeton. If her carriage stopped, he would jump out and try to accost Victoria. After being arrested several times for harassing the queen, in November 1837 Goode was committed to the Bethlem lunatic asylum.

Other men nurtured similar delusions. One ardent admirer made his way into the Chapel Royal in order to declare his love; another, Captain Tom Flower of the 15th Light Dragoons, tried to infiltrate the coronation ceremony at Westminster, having failed to get into the queen's box at the opera, and was hauled off to Tothill Fields House of Correction. Several others tried to stop the queen's horse while she was out riding; one, Ned Hayward, did so in Hyde Park in order to hand Victoria a letter asking if she would marry him.

John Stockledge, who was celebrated by the satirical press as "The Queen's Last Lunatic Lover", made a nuisance of himself in the winter of 1837. On 29 November, he was arrested after trying to get into Windsor Castle. When questioned, he said that "he was like all other men who wanted wives – he was looking after one," and thought the queen would fit the bill.



Victoria's mother, the Duchess of Kent, and uncle Prince Leopold plotted out the young princess's entire future – including a suitable marriage

Right from the day of her birth, Victoria's mother and uncle Prince Leopold had **set their hearts on a German prince for Victoria**

Plans for a prince

In reality, Victoria's mother and uncle Prince Leopold had mapped out her future life right from the day of the princess's birth on 24 May 1819. From the outset they set their hearts on a German prince as husband – and, more particularly, a Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. As far as they were concerned, the ideal candidate was Victoria's cousin, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, who had been born just three months after Victoria in August 1819.

As Victoria entered her teens, there were across Europe many other potential candidates for the hand of this most eligible royal bride. Between the ages of 13 and 18, Victoria was faced with several prospective suitors suggested by rival camps within the royal family. It was first suggested that she should marry an English prince such as George, son of her uncle, the Duke of Cumberland; Victoria never warmed to him, though, nor he to her. In 1828, the Duke of Orleans was suggested, but he was a Catholic; in 1829, the mooted match was one of the princes of Orange.

A serious onslaught of matchmaking commenced in 1836 when Victoria's two Coburg cousins, Albert and his brother Ernest, were invited to England to be vetted, along with both princes of Orange. The latter were the favoured options of King William IV, but Victoria didn't fancy them, finding them too plain and too 'Dutch' looking. As for her Coburg cousins, on this first visit Victoria was not completely taken by the "handsome" but diffident Albert, finding his brother Ernest more attractive.

By 1839, Victoria had been on the throne for two years and was coming under increasing pressure to marry. She resisted, though, declaring that she wanted to wait a few more years. Yet in May, she unexpectedly found herself enjoying the frisson of her first serious romantic encounter – not with a Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, but with a Russian.

The visit to London of Grand Duke Alexander Nikolaevich, the heir to the Russian throne, was Victoria's first experience of entertaining foreign royalty. She had received little warning of the visit, and admitted to her prime minister, Lord Melbourne, that she was "quite cross about it". She changed her tune somewhat when Alexander arrived: he was, she noted, "tall with a fine figure, a pleasing open countenance without being handsome, fine blue eyes, a short nose and a pretty mouth with a sweet smile".

Alexander brought with him a trunkful of diamond-inlaid boxes and enormous diamond rings, which he proceeded to distribute to the great and the good. For the sake of propriety, he was mostly accommodated not by the queen but at Mivart's Hotel (now Claridge's). When Victoria invited the grand duke to spend three days at Windsor, it provoked considerable official disapproval.

The dashing Alexander, who clearly was well versed in the arts of seduction, enchanted Victoria. He flattered her, whispered sweet nothings in French in her ear, and propelled her round the dance

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Queen Victoria returns to Buckingham Palace in 1839, depicted in a contemporary illustration. By that time, she was coming under increasing pressure to marry



Grand Duke Alexander Nikolaevich, heir to the Russian throne, painted in 1832. When he visited England seven years later, Victoria thought him "tall with a fine figure [and] a pleasing open countenance"

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Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, painted in 1840. A year earlier, he had visited Victoria, who considered him "grown and changed, and embellished" since she first met him in 1836

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floor till three in the morning, as she recounted in a letter to Melbourne:

"The Queen danced the first and the last dance with the Grand Duke, made him sit near her, and tried to be very civil to him, and I think we are great friends already and get on very well; I like him exceedingly."

Victoria invited Alexander to the Italian opera – though protocol dictated they should sit in separate boxes. Tongues were set wagging, however, when during the interval Alexander slipped into Victoria's box for a chat – behind a drawn curtain. Members of the Russian entourage noticed a fair degree of flirting going on between them, and a dispatch was sent to Tsar Nicholas in Russia:

"The Queen is clearly enjoying the society of His Imperial Majesty. Everyone is saying they are an ideal couple. Were the Grand Duke to make a proposal to the Queen, it would be accepted without hesitation."

In private, a tearful Victoria confided her passionate feelings for Alexander to her companion, Baroness Lehzen. It was clear that those feelings were reciprocated, but there was no possibility that Victoria could marry a Russian grand duke. As heir to the throne, with a duty to live in Russia, such a marriage was strategically, politically and geographically out of the question for Alexander.

The thought of it greatly alarmed even the Tsar, who knew how impetuous his son was. He did not want Alexander even to contemplate playing second fiddle to the English queen any more than the British government would have wanted Victoria to share power with a Russian. But when Tsar Nicholas ordered Alexander back to Darmstadt, the lovers both wept bitter tears over the disappointment in private.

On 27 May 1839, Alexander enjoyed a farewell dinner hosted in the magnificent St George's Hall in the State Apartments at Windsor. It looked beautiful, and the queen noted:

"At a little after 12 we went into the dining-room for supper; after supper they danced a Mazurka for ½ an hour, I should think nearly; the Grand-Duke asked me to take a turn, which I did… the Grand-Duke is so very strong, that in running round, you must follow quickly, and after that you are whisked round like in a Valse, which is very pleasant… I never enjoyed myself more. We were all so merry; I got to bed by a ¼ to 3, but could not sleep till 5."

On leaving England, having handed out £20,000 to various charities and the needy, Alexander made one final parting gift:

> "Though all the reports of Albert are most favourable... I may not have **the feeling for him which is requisite to ensure happiness**"

he donated £300 to the Jockey Club. In gratitude, the club established a race in his honour – the Cesarewitch Handicap [using the Victorian rendition of *tsarevich* that was in use at that time], which has been run at Newmarket ever since. As Alexander said farewell to Victoria on 29 May, he told her how touched he was by the reception he had received in England:

"[He] trusted that all his would only tend to strengthen the ties of friendship between England and Russia… I kissed his cheek; upon which he kissed mine (cheek) in a very warm affectionate manner and we again warmly shook hands… I felt so sad to take leave of this dear amiable young man, whom I really think (talking jokingly) I was a little in love with."

Victoria watched Alexander go with a great deal of sadness: he was so strong, so handsome in his Hussar's uniform, and she thought she might just be in love. For days afterwards she consoled herself by playing his favourite quadrille, *Le Gai Loisir*. A month later, news arrived in England that a reluctant Alexander had become engaged to the 15-year-old Princess Mary of Darmstadt.

Courting a cousin

Never mind – there was still another candidate in the wings. That summer, Baron Stockmar, who had been entrusted with the task of grooming Prince Albert for his role as consort to a queen, declared that his protégé was now ready to fulfill his dynastic duty.

Albert was, Stockmar reported to Prince Leopold, endowed with all the right qualities "likely to please the sex and that his mental qualities were also of a high order". But at this point Victoria dug in her heels and, after the disappointment of Grand Duke Alexander, was still insisting that she was not ready to marry.

On 15 July, she told her uncle Leopold: "Though all the reports of Albert are most favourable, and though I have little doubt I shall like him, still one can never answer beforehand for feelings, and I may not have the feeling for him which is requisite to ensure happiness. I may like him as a friend, and as a cousin and as a brother, but no more."

While Leopold and Victoria were discussing Albert's finer points as though he were a stallion at stud, Albert himself became annoyed and impatient. Waiting on Victoria's decision back in Coburg, his pride was wounded and he threatened to withdraw. But he was persuaded to visit Victoria again with Ernest in October, by which time word had got back to Victoria about his reluctance. She was not amused: "I think they don't exhibit much *empressement* [urgency] to come here, which rather shocks me."

However, everything changed when Albert arrived in October. All other possible suitors were forgotten in a heartbeat. Setting eyes on Prince Albert for the first time in three and a half years, Victoria was stunned to see that the gawky German frog had morphed into an archetypal Prince Charming:

"At ½ p.7 I went to the top of the staircase and received my dear 2 cousins Ernest and Albert – whom I found grown and changed, and embellished. It was with some emotion that I beheld Albert."

Thereafter, Victoria gushed in her journal about Albert's charm and how "excessively handsome" he was. He had "such beautiful blue eyes, an exquisite nose, and such a pretty mouth with delicate moustachios and slight but very slight whiskers; a beautiful figure, broad in the shoulders and a fine waist". To top it all, he was a wonderful dancer.

On 11 October, they danced together and she gave him a flower from her bouquet. Having no buttonhole in which to fix it, Albert took out a small penknife and, cutting a slit in his uniform, placed the flower over his heart. It was enough to make any romantically minded 20-year-old girl swoon.

Victoria wasted no time in making up her mind to marry, and in securing Lord Melbourne's approval. He was delighted: "I think it is a very good thing, and you'll be much more comfortable; for a woman cannot stand alone for long, in whatever position she is," he told her. H

Helen Rappaport is author of *The Victoria Letters* (HarperCollins, 2016), a literary companion to the ITV series *Victoria*, on which she was the historical consultant. The book features extracts from Victoria's own diaries and letters as well as historical context

THE WEDDING

"Nothing could have gone off better"



The sumptuous wedding of Queen Victoria and Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha took place on 10 February 1840 at St James's Palace. **Tracy Borman** recounts the nuptials, from the young queen's preparations to the public reaction to the new prince



Loving look
Victoria and Albert clasp hands at their wedding, depicted in a painting by Sir George Hayter, commissioned by the queen and completed in 1842. The ceremony was "very imposing and fine and simple", recalled Victoria

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"We are all going stark, staring mad. Nothing is heard or thought of but doves and cupids, triumphal arches and whit favours, and last but not least, variegated lamps and general illuminations."

This lament was published in the journal *The Satirist* during the frenzied preparations for Queen Victoria's wedding to Prince Albert on 10 February 1840. Ever since their engagement had been announced the previous November, royal wedding fever had gripped the nation.

Victoria had ascended the throne in June 1837, just a month after her 18th birthday. Youthful and apparently ill-equipped for her queenly responsibilities, it was not expected that she would rule alone for long. Yet she herself balked at the idea of taking a husband.

"I dreaded the thought of marrying," Victoria wrote. "I was so accustomed to having my own way that I thought it was 10 to 1 that I shouldn't agree with anybody." Like that earlier queen regnant, Elizabeth I, she was concerned that a husband might wish to curtail her powers. She therefore proved reluctant to pursue the matter.

The same could not be said about those who surrounded her. Victoria's family had long cherished the idea that she might marry her cousin, Prince Albert, son of Ernest I, Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, and nephew of Victoria's mother, the Duchess of Kent. He and Victoria were very close in age (Albert was just three months younger) and, as well as sharing close kinship, they had been delivered by the same midwife, Charlotte Heidenreich von Siebold.

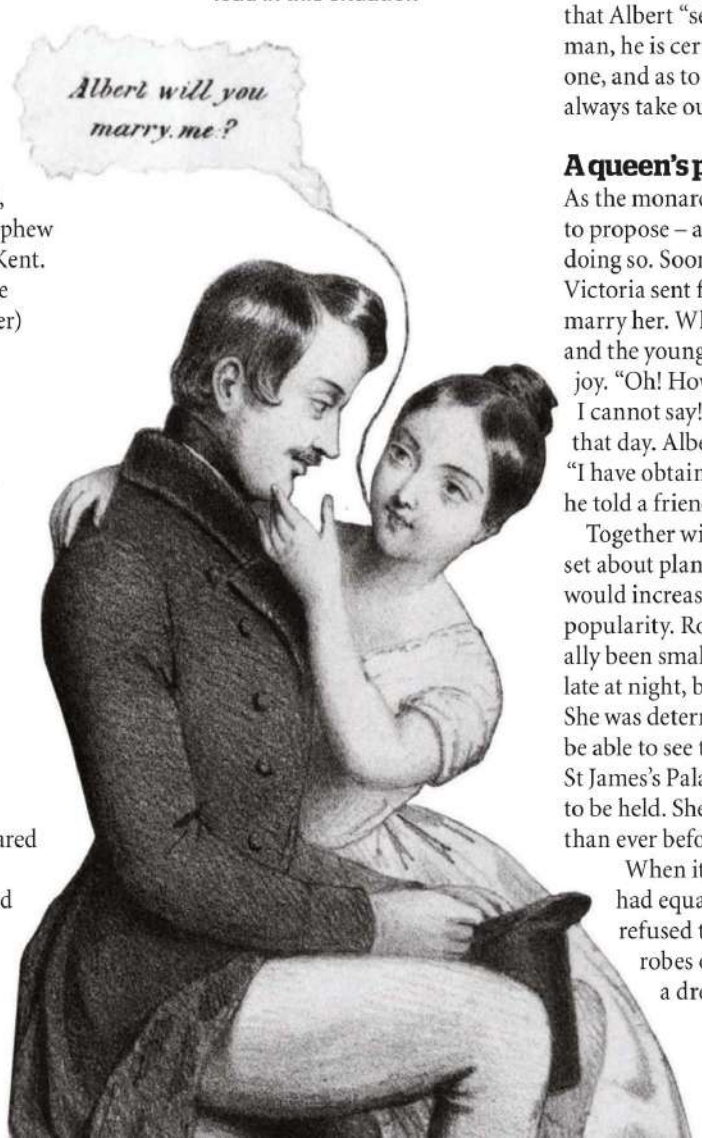
Victoria had last seen Albert when he and his brother, Ernest, had paid a visit to London in May 1836, just before her 17th birthday. She had recorded in her journal that he was "extremely handsome; his hair is about the same colour as mine; his eyes are large & blue & he has a beautiful nose & a very sweet mouth with fine teeth" and he was "full of goodness & sweetness, & very clever & intelligent".

However, Albert had not been prepared for the endless round of balls and entertainments that had been arranged in the run-up to Victoria's birthday. By the day itself, 24 May, he had reached his limit. He stayed "a short while in the ball-room & having only danced twice, turned as pale as ashes" and went home early. Nevertheless, he and Victoria had got on well and, when it was time for him to return to his native Germany, Victoria "cried bitterly, very bitterly".

Even so, Victoria still showed little inclination to marry. Upon hearing that she was queen, Prince Albert wrote to congratulate her. In the rather formal letter, he wished her a "long, happy, and glorious" reign, and prayed her to think sometimes "of your cousins in Bonn". Meanwhile, press speculation was beginning to mount about whom the young queen would marry, and this intensified when she reluctantly agreed that Albert and his brother could pay another visit. They arrived at Windsor on 10 October 1839.

Despite her reticence, Victoria was utterly captivated when she set eyes upon her cousin again for the first time in three years. "Albert's beauty is most striking," she enthused in her journal. "He is so amiable and unaffected – in short, very fascinating; he is excessively admired here." Just four days later, Victoria wrote to her prime minister, Lord Melbourne, telling him that she had changed her mind about marrying. Melbourne approved of her choice, writing that Albert "seems a very agreeable young man, he is certainly is a very good looking one, and as to character, that, we must always take our chance of".

Victoria set about planning a lavish ceremony... **Royal weddings had traditionally been small, private ceremonies, but Victoria changed all that**



An engraving of 1840 shows Victoria proposing to Albert the previous year. As monarch, Victoria had to take the lead in this situation

A queen's proposal

As the monarch, Victoria had to be the one to propose – and she wasted little time in doing so. Soon after midday on 15 October, Victoria sent for Albert and asked him to marry her. When he agreed, they embraced and the young queen was overcome with joy. "Oh! How I adore and love him, I cannot say!!" she wrote in her diary that day. Albert was no less enamoured. "I have obtained the height of my desire," he told a friend.

Together with Lord Melbourne, Victoria set about planning a lavish ceremony that would increase her already considerable popularity. Royal weddings had traditionally been small, private ceremonies held late at night, but Victoria changed all that. She was determined that her people would be able to see the bridal procession drive to St James's Palace, where the ceremony was to be held. She also invited more guests than ever before.

When it came to her dress, Victoria had equally decided opinions. She refused to wear her crimson velvet robes of state. Instead, she opted for a dress of pure white and "simple

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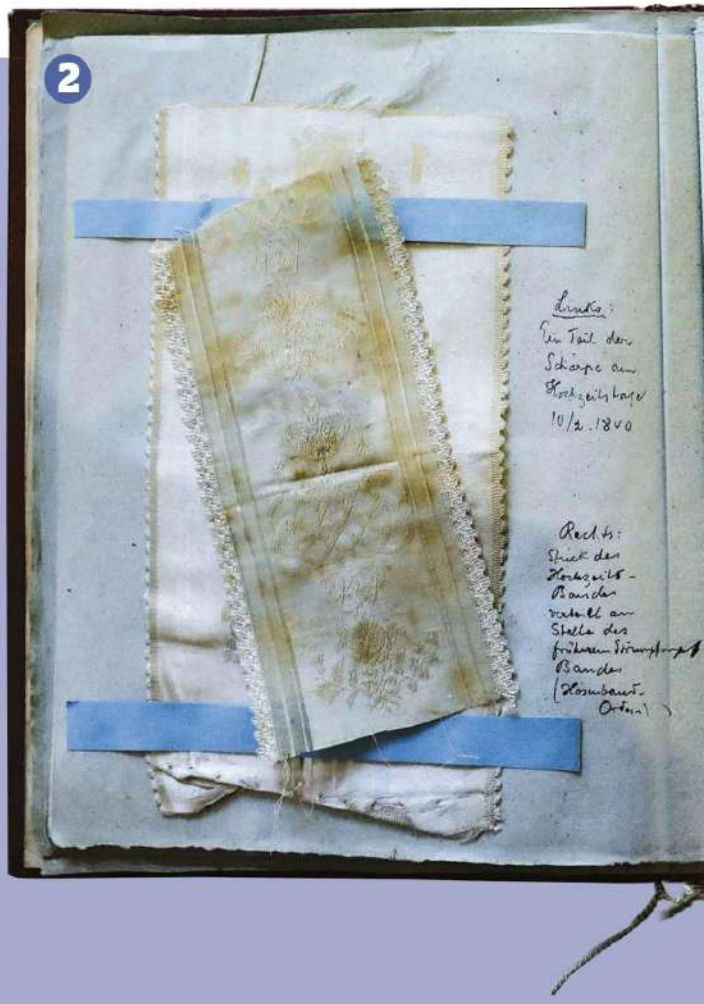
Eton boys greet the royal couple with cheers on their return to Windsor from London on the evening of their wedding, as depicted in a late-19th-century illustration

1 Silk and satin
Shoes and stockings said to have been worn by Victoria at her wedding. The shoes have silk satin uppers and ribbons, while the stockings are embroidered with the royal cipher

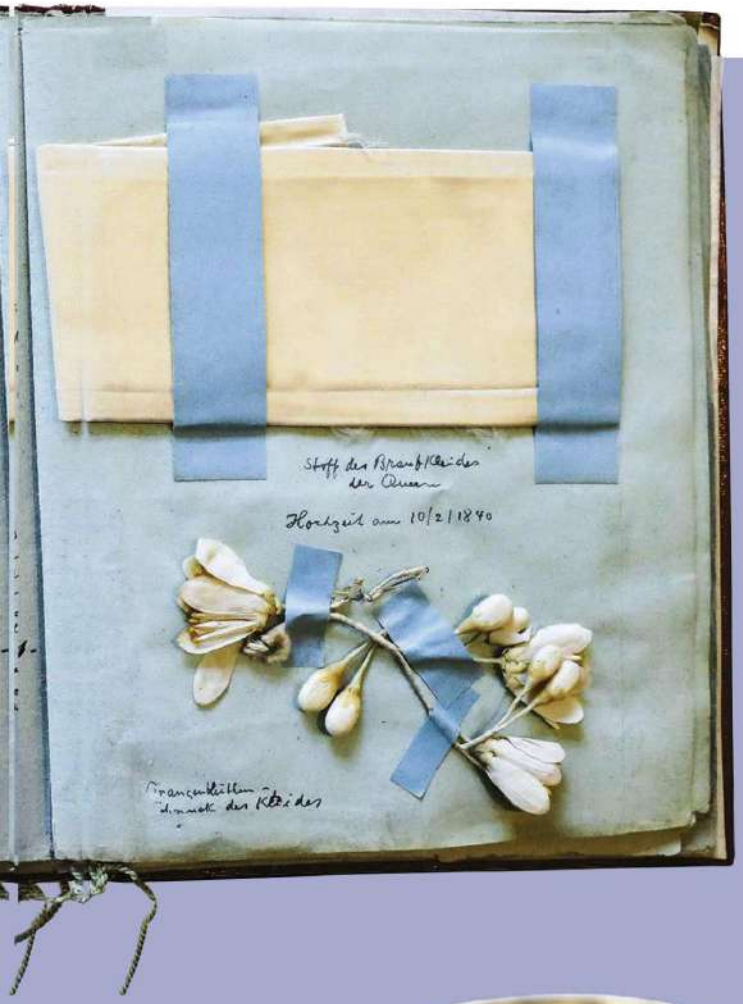
2 Pale memories
Pieces of fabric from Victoria's wedding garb and a sprig from her bouquet, collected in a scrapbook created by her governess, Baroness Louise Lehzen

3 Vision in white
(l-r): An engraving from 1840 shows the young Queen Victoria on her wedding day; Victoria's simple white satin wedding dress was offset by her diamond necklace; the queen's wedding dress, pictured here in 2012, sparked a vogue for copying royal bridal fashions













GETTY IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK/MUSEUM OF LONDON/RAAB COLLECTION

4 Ring the changes
Six dozen copies of this commemorative ring were commissioned from royal jewellers Rundell, Bridge & Co, to be presented to friends and relations

5 Hot ticket
The Duke of Wellington's invitation to the wedding at St James's Palace. The guest list proved a bone of contention because the Chapel Royal could hold only 300 people

When the wedding day finally dawned, the bride awoke to pouring rain, but that did nothing to dampen her spirits. **Outside, the crowds had been braving the rain since eight o'clock**

magnificence". This enhanced the sense of her purity and innocence, but had a more practical effect, too: it made her more visible to the thousands of people who turned out to watch the procession. In so doing, she established a tradition that would be observed the world over. The queen's dress had the added advantage of being easy to replicate, thus sparking the craze for women across the country copying royal bridal fashions.

Victoria also chose white as the colour for her 12 bridesmaids. Deciding who should fulfil this role, though, proved problematic, thanks to Albert's demand that they should each be born of a mother of spotless character. This was all very well in theory, but in practice many court ladies had enjoyed affairs with Victoria's "wicked uncles", all of whom had preferred mistresses to wives.

Further problems were presented by the fact that the Chapel Royal at St James's could accommodate only 300 people (at a push), so whittling down the guest list was a challenge. Victoria also courted controversy by inviting only five Tories – and then begrudgingly – which betrayed her bias towards the Whig party.

When the wedding day finally dawned, the bride awoke to pouring rain, but that did nothing to dampen her spirits. "How are you today and have you slept well?" she wrote cheerfully to her bridegroom. Outside, the crowds had been braving the rain since eight o'clock. They cheered when they saw the young queen pass by in her carriage, wearing her beautiful but simple



Confection perfection
Victoria's wedding cake was a huge, magnificent creation: ornately decorated, nearly three metres in circumference and weighing around 140kg – it took four men to carry it

BRIDGEMAN-ROYAL COLLECTION TRUST © HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II, 2019/BRIDGEMAN/ALAMY

white gown, a diamond necklace and a sapphire brooch that "my Angel" Albert had given her. Despite being dressed in the scarlet-and-white uniform of a British field marshal, the groom apparently failed to make a favourable impression. Florence Nightingale, in the crowd, observed that he appeared to be wearing clothes "no doubt borrowed to be married in".

Because Victoria's father had died when she was a baby, she was given away by the Duke of Sussex. As they processed through the State Rooms to the Chapel Royal, the bridesmaids – whom one guest complained were dressed so simply that they looked like "village girls" – struggled to cope with Victoria's 5.5-metre-long (18 feet) train and kept treading on each other's feet. But the bride was delighted with them and recorded that they made "a beautiful effect" in their white dresses adorned with white roses.

Promise to obey

Despite her earlier concerns about marriage eroding her power, the queen insisted on keeping the vow 'to obey'. This sparked concerns about Albert's political role, although it would soon become obvious that Victoria was unwilling to obey anybody.

In her journal, she described the ceremony as "very imposing and fine and simple, and I think ought to make an everlasting impression on everyone who promises at the Altar to keep what he or she promises".

The wedding breakfast was held at Buckingham Palace. Before it started, the newlyweds stole half an hour alone together. Victoria gave Albert a ring, and he told her that they should never keep any secrets from each other.

The couple had ordered a hundred cakes to be eaten on the day, with some to be distributed among relations, ambassadors, household and state officials. The wedding cake itself was a gargantuan creation, weighing in at around 140kg (300lbs), 2.7 metres (9 feet) in circumference. Little wonder that it took four men to carry it. It was decorated with a figure of Britannia standing above the newlyweds, flanked by cupids, one of which held a book bearing the date of the wedding.

The Times reported: "We are assured that not one of the cherubs on the royal wedding cake was intended to represent Lord Palmerston. The resemblance therefore pointed out… must be purely accidental."



TOP **Queen Victoria with her first baby, also Victoria (known as Vicky). The queen became pregnant within weeks of her wedding to Albert**
CENTRE **Myrtle from Victoria's bouquet was planted, and a sprig from that bush was carried by the future Queen Elizabeth II on her wedding day**

Victoria established an array of traditions still observed in weddings to this day, **from white wedding dresses to ostentatious cakes**

As soon as the banquet was over, the queen changed into a white silk travelling gown and set off with her new husband for Windsor Castle. The diarist Charles Greville grumbled that the coach was shabby and they had only a small escort. But, as Victoria had predicted, her choice pleased a people weary of the excesses of her uncles. She wrote that there was "an immense crowd… quite deafening us" all the way to Windsor.

By the time they finally arrived, at seven o'clock that evening, the young queen had a headache and had to lie down. Her attentive new husband sat by her side, and she enthused that "His excessive love and affection gave me feelings of heavenly love and happiness I never could have hoped to have felt before!"

The brief repose restored Victoria's energy and she later boasted that neither she nor Albert had any sleep on their wedding night. Within weeks of the wedding, Victoria was pregnant. The child, Victoria (Vicky), was the first of nine that the marriage would produce.

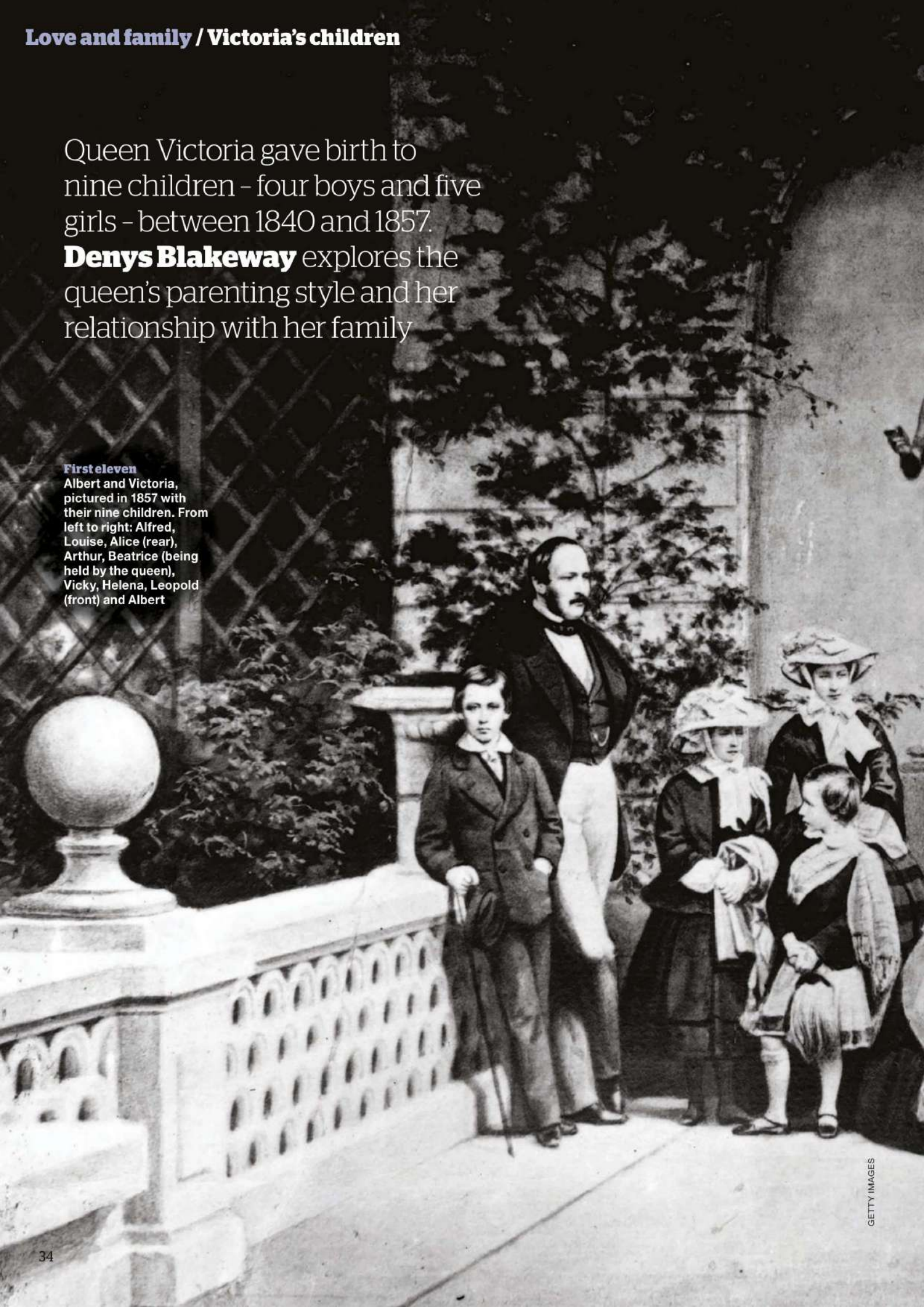
Victoria and Albert's wedding had been a triumph. "Nothing could have gone off better," declared Lord Melbourne. The newspapers agreed that the young queen had conducted matters perfectly.

In doing so, Victoria had established an array of traditions still observed in weddings – royal and otherwise – to this day, from white wedding dresses to ostentatious cakes. Victoria had the myrtle from her bouquet planted, and a sprig from the bush was later carried by the future Queen Elizabeth II on her wedding day.

Above all, though, Victoria raised the profile of royal weddings to an unprecedented degree. Never again would a queen or king marry in private, late at night. The royal wedding ceremony had become an important element of a strategy for securing the loyalties of the public. As recent royal weddings have proved, this is still very much the case today. H

Tracy Borman is a bestselling author and historian. She co-authored *The Ring and the Crown: A History of Royal Weddings, 1066–2011* (Hutchinson, 2011) with Alison Weir, Kate Williams and Sarah Gristwood, and is joint chief curator of Historic Royal Palaces, including Queen Victoria's birthplace, Kensington Palace

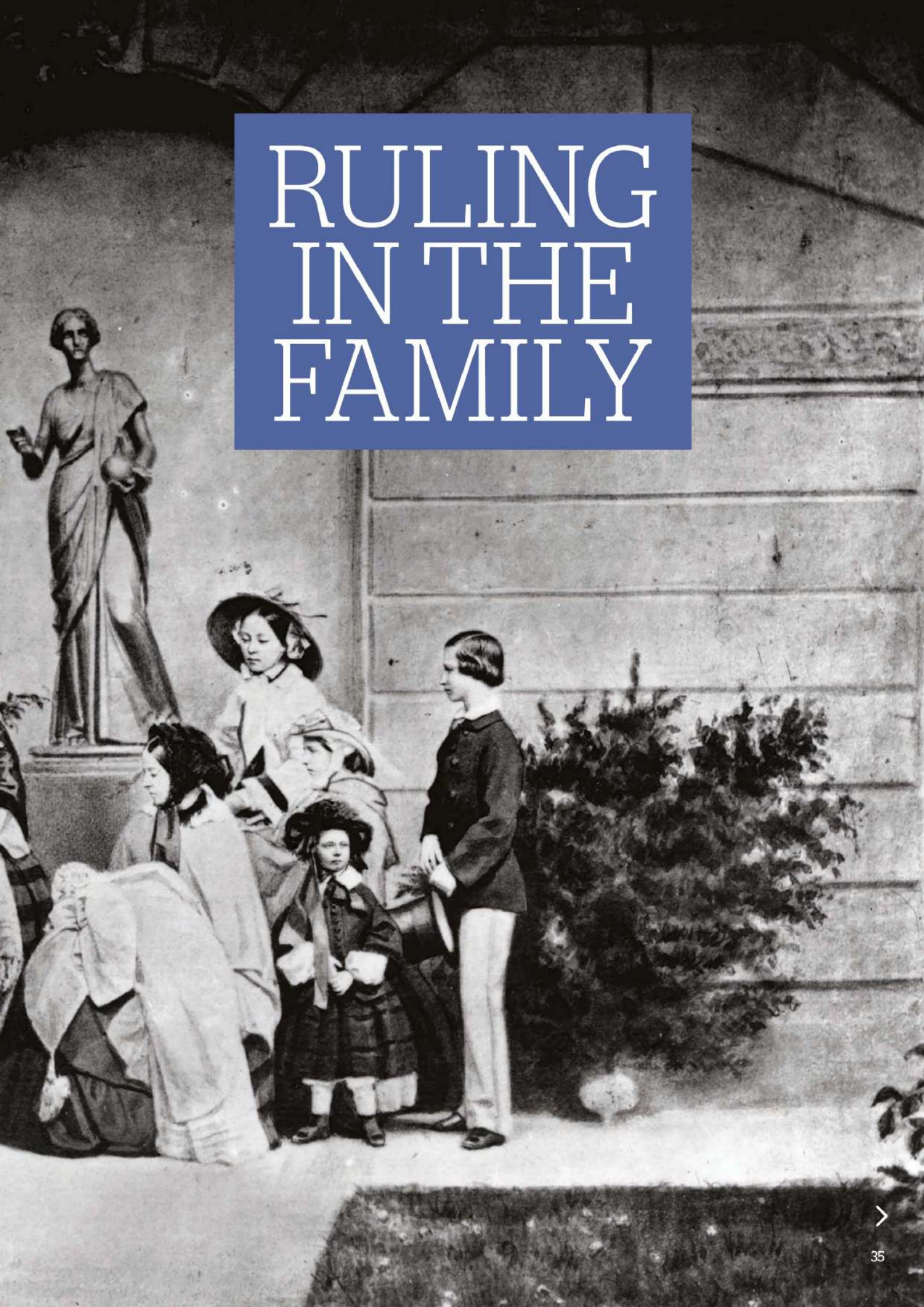
Queen Victoria gave birth to nine children – four boys and five girls – between 1840 and 1857. **Denys Blakeway** explores the queen's parenting style and her relationship with her family



First eleven
Albert and Victoria, pictured in 1857 with their nine children. From left to right: Alfred, Louise, Alice (rear), Arthur, Beatrice (being held by the queen), Vicky, Helena, Leopold (front) and Albert

GETTY IMAGES

RULING IN THE FAMILY

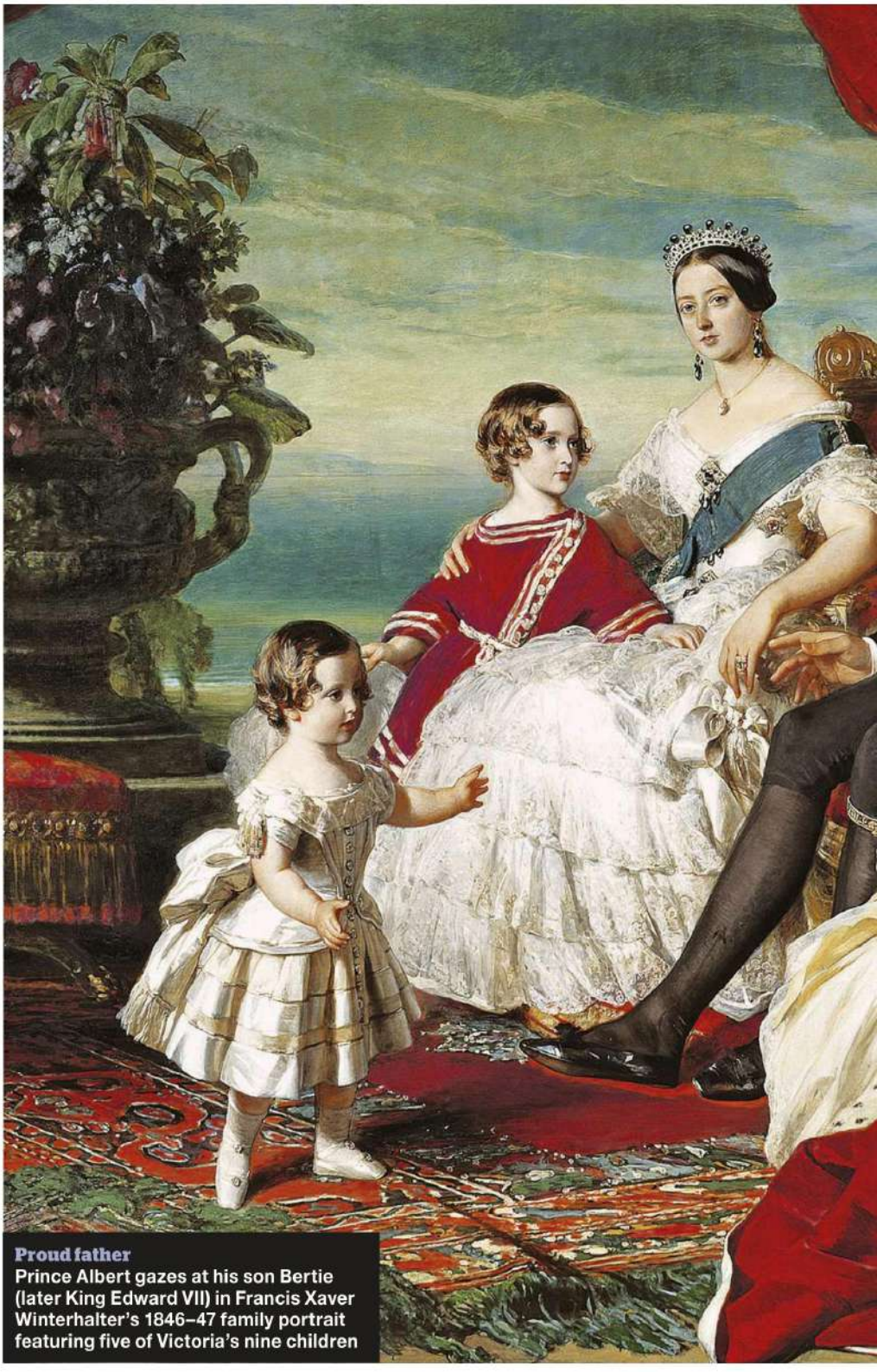


Queen Victoria and her consort Prince Albert were passionate lovers with a mutual physical attraction – but with seemingly no understanding of family planning. The result was that they had nine children, born between 1840 and 1857. Albert, intelligent and ambitious, was determined to put this burgeoning brood to good use. He and Victoria were united in the desire that they should not just be a model, loving and happy family, but that they would also set a moral example that would redefine royalty and be the foundation of a dynasty that would stretch across Europe, bringing peace and harmony to the fractious continent.

It was a noble plan, motivated by the highest ideals, and one that was to lead to the creation of the modern idea of the royal family that is so familiar to us today. But, like so many of the best-laid plans, human nature got in the way.

It was Albert, the intellectual, who was responsible for shaping and modernising the royal family in the 19th century, and his influence would last well into the next. From the moment of his marriage to Victoria in 1840 to his untimely death 21 years later, he saw his purpose as protecting and nourishing the British monarchy at a time when political turmoil threatened at home and revolution was sweeping Europe. Albert believed that, in order to survive and prosper, royalty should be presented as a respectable, close-knit and loving family. As the historian Miranda Carter says, "It's as if Albert and Victoria are trying to reach out to their middle-class subjects and say: 'look, we are like you – trust us'."

But of course the royal family was not like the middle class. It existed in the enclosed bubble of the court, where tensions and hostilities festered and where children were fawned over and flattered from the moment they were born. Yet at the same time these youngsters were expected to be model children, utterly obedient to their parents. It was an intolerable tension.



Proud father
Prince Albert gazes at his son Bertie (later King Edward VII) in Francis Xaver Winterhalter's 1846–47 family portrait featuring five of Victoria's nine children

Troubled childhoods

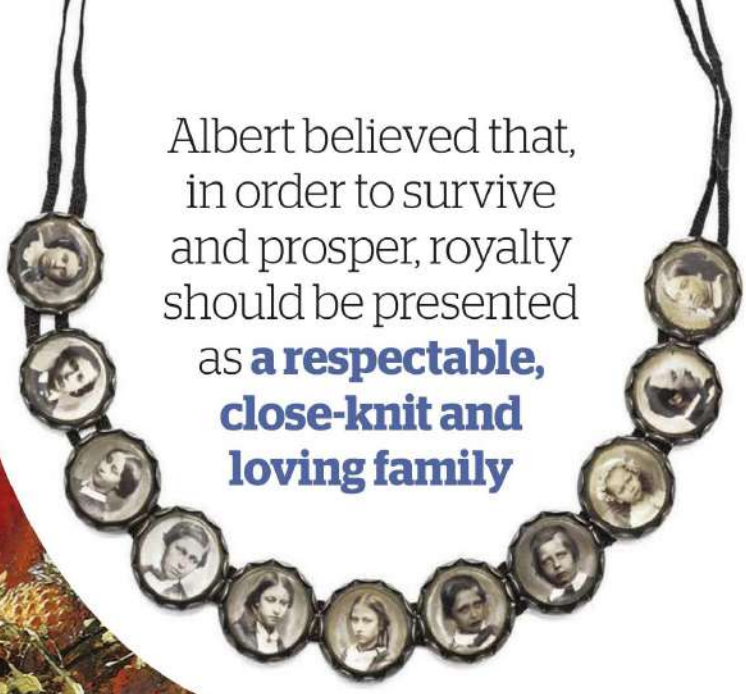
A fraught family life was perhaps unsurprising, given the couple's own experiences. They were both the products of unhappy childhoods. Albert's upbringing in Germany had been overshadowed by the breakdown of his parents' marriage. His father, the Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfield (and then, from 1826, Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha), was a serial philanderer who paid little attention to his son. Albert grew up longing for his father's love, while at the same time detesting his behaviour. He was determined that, when the time came, he would be a model father and everything that his father was not. The problem, though, was that when he became a parent, he had no example to follow.

Victoria, too, had much to react against. She had grown up (at least, according to her own accounts – see page 12 for an alternative view based on recent research) secluded at Kensington Palace under the control of her domineering mother, the Duchess of Kent. Later she wrote, revealingly, "I had led a very unhappy life as a child – had no scope for my very violent feelings of affection… and did not know what a happy domestic life was."

The couple, deeply in love and physically well suited, were united in the wish to create a family that would serve not just as an escape from their own unhappy pasts,



Albert believed that, in order to survive and prosper, royalty should be presented as **a respectable, close-knit and loving family**



A silver commemorative necklace featuring photographs of Victoria, Albert and their nine children

but also as a pan-European dynasty and a model for a nation.

Unsurprisingly given the couple's physical infatuation, their first child, Princess Victoria (called Vicky) was born just nine months after their wedding. The queen was busy with her duties as monarch and could spare little time for her baby, seeing her only twice a day.

Within a year of Vicky's birth, Albert Edward (known as Bertie) – the future King Edward VII – was born. The queen now had a healthy male heir. "Our little boy is a wonderfully strong and large child," she wrote proudly. "I hope and pray he may be like his dearest Papa." With the succession reasonably assured, it might be thought that a rest from the risk of childbearing would be appropriate. Instead, over the next five years another three children were born: Alice, Alfred and Helena.

Queen Victoria gave birth to many children, but she hated being pregnant, and historians have suggested that she may have suffered from postnatal depression. She compared the sensation of pregnancy to feeling like a cow, and had little affection for babies, writing that "an ugly baby is a very nasty object – and the prettiest is frightful when undressed… as long as they have their big body and little limbs and that terrible froglike action".

She could not contemplate breastfeeding her babies – she found the whole process repulsive. A wet nurse was therefore employed to feed all of her children. Despite these reservations, Victoria devoted herself to Albert, and the result was four more children: Louise, Arthur, Leopold and Beatrice. Victoria had nine babies over 17 years – a tremendous physical feat, and a dangerous one given the high rates of maternal mortality at the time.

Model family

The royal couple set to work putting into action their plan to nurture a model family. It was essential for them also that they were seen to be doing so. Albert well understood that, with the genesis of mass communication, there was a need for the public to be made aware of the ideal for which the royal family were striving.

Under the Hanoverian kings who preceded Victoria, the monarchy had fallen into disrepute, torn apart by feuding and scandal. Now, in countless paintings and photographs, Victoria and Albert were shown in harmonious family group portraits. Today these pictures provide a lovely record – if not a strictly true one – of the development of the royal family. The publicity worked, and Victoria was delighted: "They say no Sovereign was ever more loved than I (I am bold enough to say), and this because of our happy domestic home and the good example it presents."

SHUTTERSTOCK/BRIDGEMAN-RCT
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In a reversal of the typical roles of the time, Victoria devoted herself to regal duties while Albert took responsibility for the upbringing of the children. He was a new type of father, ahead of his time, with a hands-on approach to child-rearing. From the beginning his relationship with his first child, Vicky, went well. Lady Lyttleton, a governess, remembered seeing him playing with her: "Albert tossed and romped with her, making her laugh and crow and kick heartily."

Victoria, in contrast, was far more distant and guarded. She looked on as Albert took control of all aspects of the children's development. At first, Albert found this task fulfilling and stimulating, appealing to his sense of himself as an expert in human behaviour: "There is certainly a great charm, as well as deep interest, in watching the development of feelings and faculties in a little child," he once remarked.

An education

Albert was the product of an intensive German education that had shaped him into an accomplished polymath. He expected the same of his children – and more. He developed a punishing educational programme to create the model prince or princess – one, though, that took little account of the abilities of an average intellect. According to Baron Stockmar, his advisor, the regime would give any child brain fever.

The plan began when the children were infants, with the instilling of discipline. "The chief objects here," the prince opined, "are their physical development, the actual rearing up, the training to obedience." Corporal punishment was at the heart of this training. The children frequently received "a real punishment by whipping" if they stepped out of line, and Albert himself would hit his children's fingers during piano lessons when they played the wrong notes.

There was instruction, too, in manners and, as the children grew older, lessons in the languages of the courts of Europe, especially German and French. On top of that there was tuition in Latin, geography, maths and science. Such an education would have been tough even for the most able child, but for the mostly very average young princes and princesses it was purgatory.

Fortunately, Vicky, the eldest child, was extremely bright, and the strict regime got off to a good start. She began her French lessons at the tender age of 18 months; soon she was speaking Latin and reading Shakespeare. Naturally, given her parents' heritage, she also became fluent in German.

Bertie obstinately refused to conform to his father's plan for the royal children's education. **Here was no Renaissance prince in the making**

The queen fully backed her husband's plan. She idolised him to the children, telling them "none of you can ever be proud enough of being the child of such a father who has not his equal in this world".

It followed that she would want them, especially the boys, to be brought up as mini-replicas of the man she adored so ardently. She prayed that her baby Bertie would grow up to "resemble his angelic dearest Father in every, every respect, both in body and mind".

Of course, life being what it is, the heir to the throne turned out in every respect to be the opposite of his father. His parents believed he could be a blank slate on which they could draw a perfect little Albert – but they were utterly wrong.

From an early age, Bertie obstinately refused to conform to his father's plan for the royal children's education. Here was no Renaissance prince in the making: despite being stuffed with facts and theory, he found learning difficult and was unable to concentrate. The intense pressure on the backward young prince produced a negative reaction.

Bertie's tutor, Frederick Gibbs, remembered the frequent schoolroom tantrums during arithmetic lessons with the Prince of Wales: "He became passionate, the pencil was flung to the end of the room, the stool was kicked away and he was hardly able to apply himself at all."

Albert's plan for the education of his heir – heir to the throne of the greatest empire the world had ever seen – turned out a complete failure. Instead of the longed-for polymath, his son turned out to be a dunce. Victoria complained about his "systematic idleness, laziness – disregard of everything". The worried parents consulted a phrenologist, a modish quack who claimed the shape of the head affected the brain. His diagnosis confirmed everything they feared: "The feeble quality of the brain will render the Prince highly excitable… intellectual organs are only moderately well developed. The result will be strong self-will, at times obstinacy."

The Prince of Wales was not the only one of the nine children who played up and refused to conform to Albert's plan for a perfect royal development. As each grew up, he or she displayed the quirks and characteristics of individual human nature. Albert was perplexed and dismayed, and he came to suspect that his children were suffering from their Stuart inheritance – certainly they could not have inherited their frailties and foibles from his princely blood! But the plan had to go on.



Bertie, Prince of Wales, pictured in c1860 aged around 19. He reacted against his father's educational regime

Royal marriages

As time passed, eight of the children were married off to European princes and princesses, part of a plan to create a pan-European dynasty. First to go was Princess Victoria, the eldest, as the bride of Fritz of Prussia in January 1858. Both of her parents were devastated to lose their 17-year-old – especially Albert, who wrote that "the pang of parting was great on all sides, and the void which Vicky has left in our household and family circle will stand gaping for many a day". But dynastic duty had to override human feeling, and his favourite daughter was taken away to a new and bewildering life in the Prussian court.

The pressure on Albert to both carry out all his many royal duties and also bring up the family according to his plan was immense. He found his work

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The Queen and Prince Albert at Home (c1845). As this playful picture suggests, Albert initially took a hands-on approach to parenting



Victoria (known as Vicky), the Princess Royal, and Prince Albert (Bertie, later King Edward VII) in a portrait of 1843



Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and 'Vicky', pictured just before the 17-year-old princess's wedding to Fritz of Prussia on 25 January 1858

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Royal pairing
Princess Alexandra of Denmark and the Prince of Wales, pictured on their wedding day, 10 March 1863. The match had been arranged by Prince Albert three years earlier

ALAMY

exhausting. In 1860 he compared himself to a donkey on a treadmill, complaining: "He, too, would rather munch thistles in the castle moat. Small are the thanks he gets for his labour."

Victoria, ever self-centred and emotional, came to resent the attention Albert paid to the children. There were frequent outbursts and marital rows. The strain took its toll on the prince consort's health: he suffered toothache, insomnia and fits of shivering. The doctors were mystified, unable to make a proper diagnosis. Victoria, meanwhile, failed to empathise with her husband. In one of her many letters to her daughter Vicky, she wrote: "Dear Papa never allows he is any better or will try to get over it, but makes such a miserable face that people always think he is very ill."

Albert soldiered on, desperate to realise his vision for the royal family. In 1860 he arranged the key dynastic marriage: of the Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra of Denmark. In a changing world, it was crucial that this be portrayed both as a worthwhile diplomatic alliance (which it was) and a love match. The Victorian public, in an era of pious rectitude, demanded a pure marriage in which the heir to the throne appeared to be virtuous and chaste.

The Prince of Wales, however, was anything but chaste. From an early age, his life had been devoted to pleasure – much to his parent's desperate alarm. In the summer of 1861, Bertie attended a training camp with Grenadier Guards in Dublin. His fellow officers arranged for a 'lady of easy virtue' to join him for the night. The story of the prince's trysts got back to his parents, and provoked in Albert a furious, almost hysterical, response. How could his son, he demanded, "thrust yourself into the hands of one of the most abject of the human species, to be by her initiated in the sacred mysteries of creation?" Everything that Albert had been working for seemed threatened. He warned Bertie that "you must not, you dare not be lost; the consequences for this country and the world at large would be too dreadful."

A tragic death

Albert's plan for perfect children seemed to have failed utterly. Sickening and feverish, Albert travelled to meet the Prince of Wales at Cambridge to harangue him on the error of his ways. Father and son went for a long walk in the rain. Bertie apologised; Albert forgave him, then returned to Windsor wet through, racked with pain in his legs and suffering from fever. He retired to bed, where his symptoms worsened.

In December 1861, aged only 42, Albert died. Queen Victoria's grief was so great that it would dominate her family and the nation for decades to come. And, of course, she blamed her eldest son, Bertie, for her beloved's death. For years she could hardly bring herself even to look at him.

With Albert's death, the idea of raising perfect children died, too. Victoria managed as best she could, relying on her position as queen and her domineering character to make her children bend to her will. In this she was generally successful, though she and the Prince of Wales gave each other a wide berth. And her many letters show she was always at heart a loving mother, though also a mixture of egocentric martinet and self-pitying widow.

Like all parents before and after, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert learned that children have an extraordinary ability to perplex, frustrate and amaze with their individuality and their obstinate refusal to turn into little paragons.

Years later, Victoria was honest enough to say this herself in a surprising yet characteristic admission: "You will find as your children grow up that as a rule your children are a bitter disappointment – their greatest object being to do precisely what their parents do not wish and have anxiously tried to prevent." The great matriarch concluded with an eternal truth that it had taken her years to come to appreciate: "often when children have been less watched and less taken care of – the better they turn out! This is inexplicable and very annoying!"

Certainly, her own children, in the main, turned out well enough despite the untimely death of their father and the failure of his plan. Even Bertie, a libertine and prince of pleasure, proved to be a very successful king whose easy charm and diplomatic skills ensured the continuing popularity of the British royal family and brought Britain closer to France on the eve of the catastrophe of the First World War. In a surprising and all-too-human way, Albert's plan had worked out after all. H



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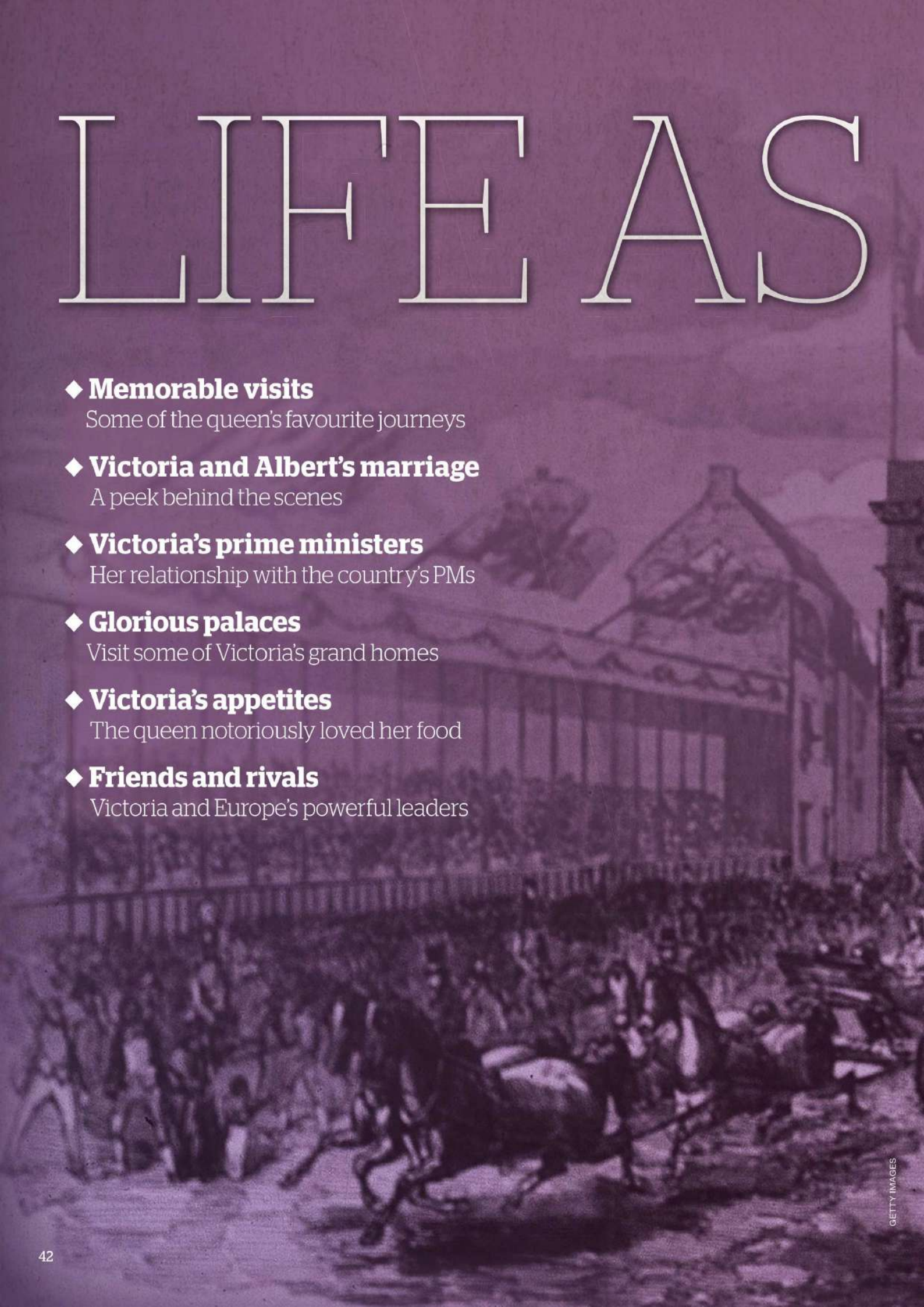
Victoria, seen in mourning shortly after Albert's death in 1861, blamed her son Bertie (pictured above)'s sexual indiscretions for causing her beloved husband's demise. Despite her disapproval of his character, he proved a canny king

With Albert's death, the idea of raising perfect children died, too. Victoria managed as best she could, relying on **her domineering character to make her children bend to her will**

Denys Blakeway is a documentary producer and writer. He was the executive producer of *Queen Victoria's Children*, a three-part series that first aired on BBC Two in 2016

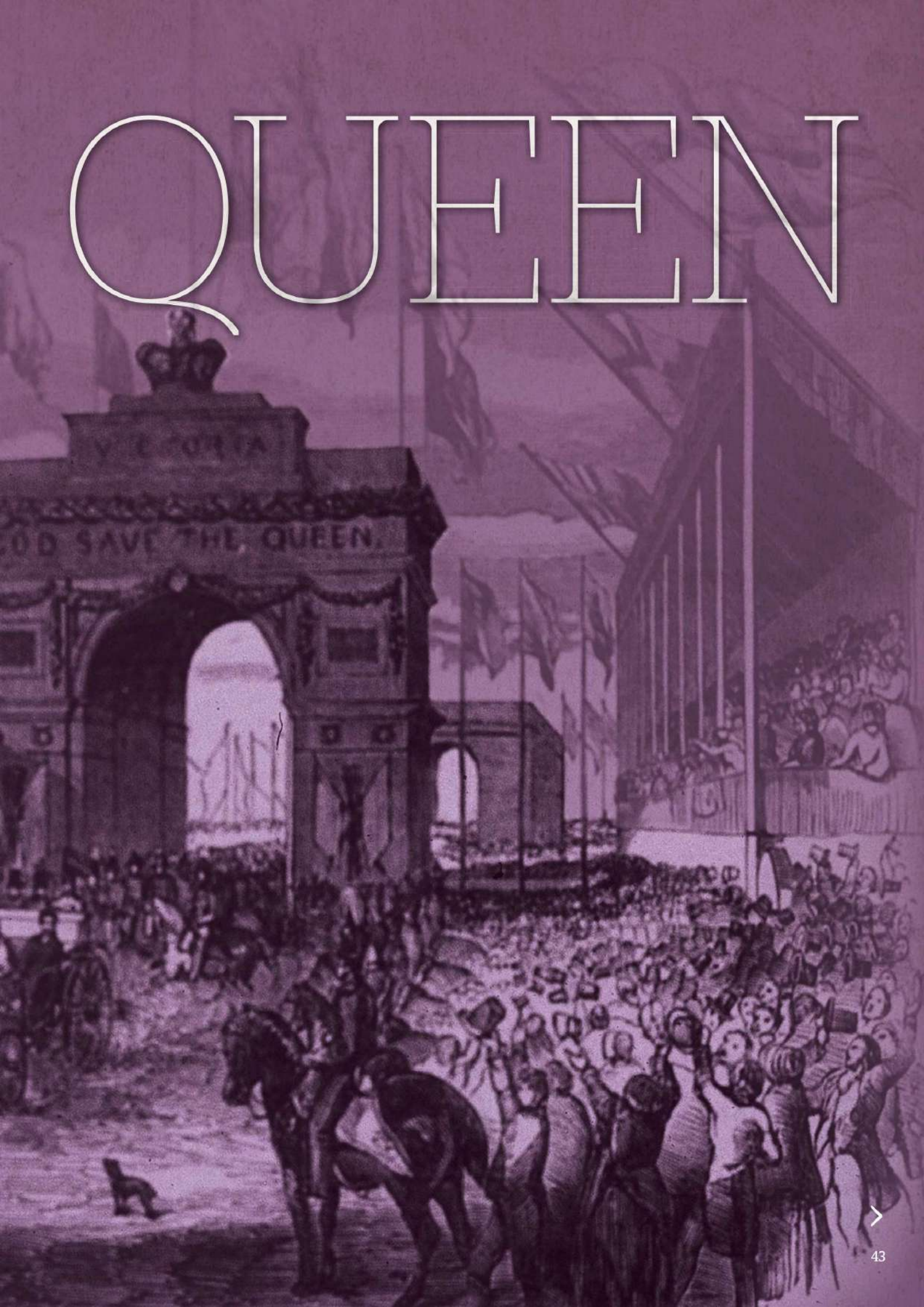
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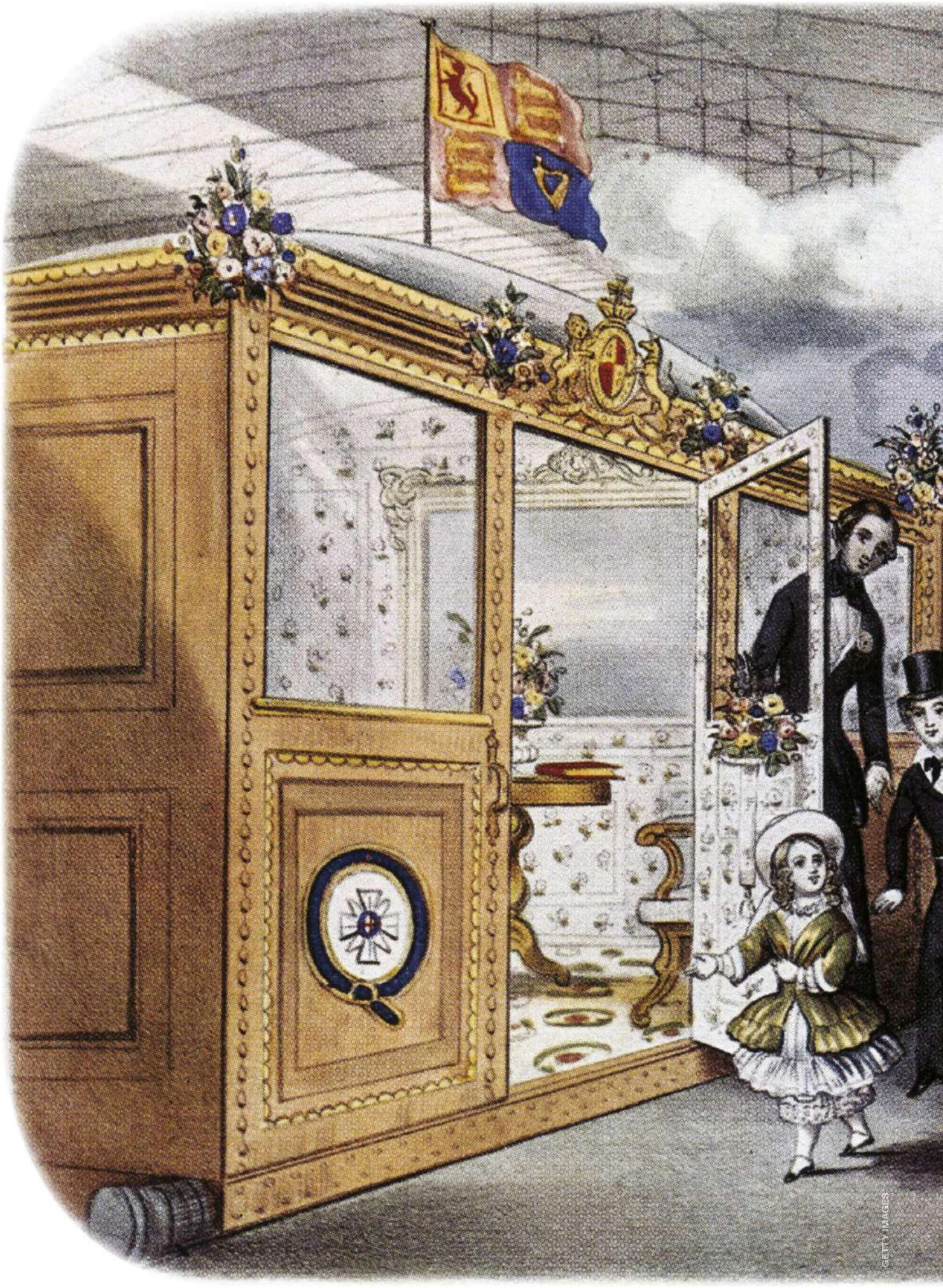
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- **Victoria and Albert's marriage**
  A peek behind the scenes
- **Victoria's prime ministers**
  Her relationship with the country's PMs
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  The queen notoriously loved her food
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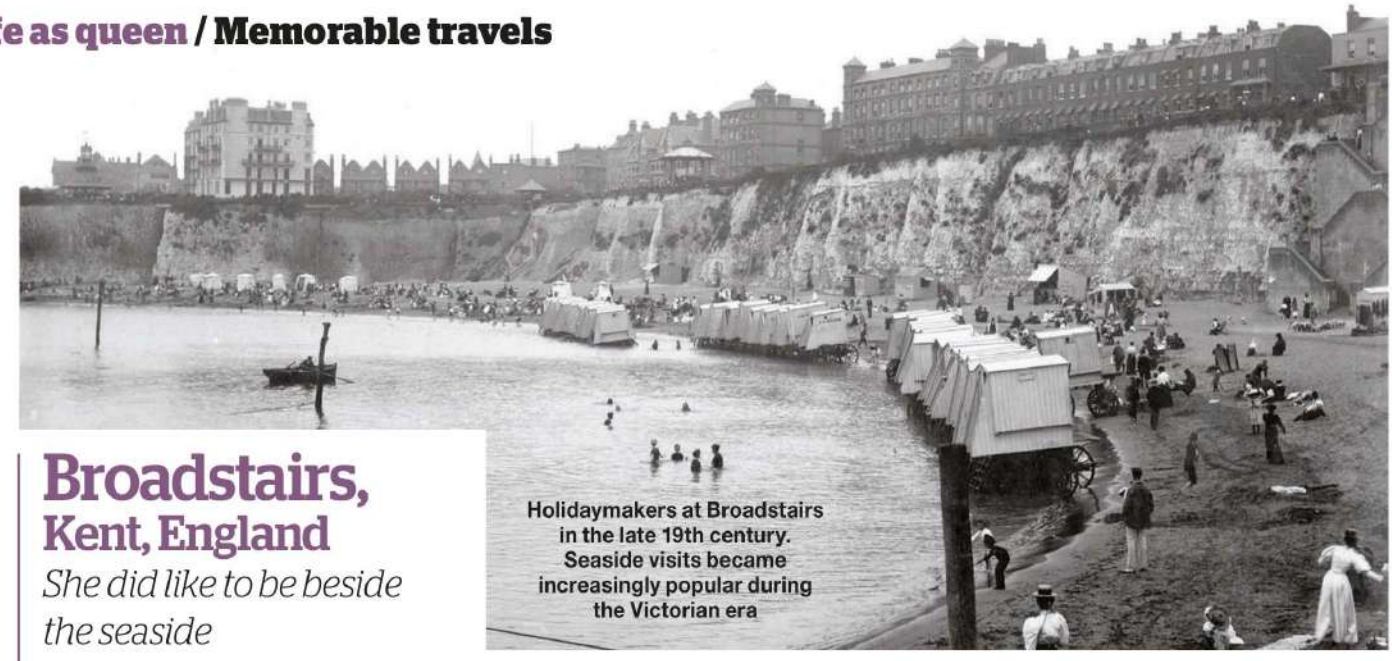
Queen Victoria and her family board the royal train for the journey to Scotland, in a contemporary illustration. Victoria was "quite charmed" by this new way of travelling after her first train journey, from Windsor to London, in June 1842

Victoria enjoyed her various homes around the country, but also visited several other destinations in Britain and overseas. **Helen Carr** recounts the queen's travels in eight diverse locations

On 13 June 1842, Queen Victoria left Windsor Castle in a horse-drawn carriage and travelled to Slough to board a steam train for the first time, to travel to Paddington Station in London. She was initially trepidatious, but was encouraged by her beloved husband, Prince Albert, who had undertaken the journey several times already.

Victoria was pleasantly surprised by the experience: "It took us exactly 30 minutes going to Paddington, & the motion was very slight, & much easier than a carriage, also no dust or great heat, — in fact, it was delightful, & so quick. We were at Buckingham Palace by 20 m. to 1." The young queen even later wrote to her uncle, King Leopold of Belgium, that she was "quite charmed" by this new way of travelling.

In fact, Victoria undertook a number of journeys to destinations in Britain and overseas (the latter largely as personal rather than state visits), beginning even before the steam train came into regular use.



Holidaymakers at Broadstairs in the late 19th century. Seaside visits became increasingly popular during the Victorian era

Broadstairs, Kent, England

She did like to be beside the seaside

Victoria had travelled from an early age, and a regular destination in her youth was Broadstairs in Kent. In October 1835, aged 16, Victoria made the familiar and easy journey, noting in her journal: "[It] began to rain and we got into the carriage and drove to Broadstairs to pay Princess Sophia Matilda [of Gloucester, Victoria's cousin] a visit. We all walked with the Princess on the sort of Parade at Broadstairs and then got into our carriage and drove home."

'Breezy Broadstairs' was endorsed for its fresh air and health benefits, and became fashionable with Londoners looking to escape the crowded capital that was increasingly thick with the smog of industry. Charles Dickens, who was a regular visitor, was inspired to write *Bleak House* after a stay in Broadstairs.

Other coastal resorts also became popular with urbanites keen to take the air. In 1826, Victoria wrote to her uncle, the Duke of York – who had travelled to Brighton, another popular coastal destination, for the good of his health – that "we hope to hear that Brighton does you a great deal of good."

In Broadstairs Victoria stayed at the top of the high street at Pierremont Hall, a luxury establishment, enjoying its pleasure gardens and lavish furnishings. Victoria lodged there several times with her mother, the Duchess of Kent, over a period of ten years; she took her own mahogany bed, writing: "I was asleep in a minute in my own little bed which travells [sic] always with me".

'Breezy Broadstairs' was endorsed for its **fresh air and health benefits**

Ireland

A surprisingly warm welcome by a famine-stricken people

Once Victoria was crowned queen, travel became a duty. In 1849, she visited Ireland, then in the grips of the Great Famine.

This horrific tragedy stemmed from factors including the long-term exploitation of poor tenant farmers and British-government-imposed export policies. Hunger turned to famine with the arrival in 1845 of potato blight, which devastated the crop on which so many Irish poor had been forced to become reliant.

In March 1849, a cholera outbreak further increased the suffering. The famine killed more than one million people, and a further million fled the country in search of a fate better than death by starvation or disease, many of them sailing for America aboard vessels dubbed 'coffin ships'.

Despite the appalling suffering of the people of Ireland at that time, on 3 August 1849 a vast crowd lined the harbour at Cork to see the royal yacht. As Victoria disembarked, she was greeted by a mass of happy, excited faces, and she was struck by the kindness of their welcome despite their evident poverty, remarking: "The enthusiasm and excitement shown by the Irish people was extreme. We feel so deeply touched at the affectionate loyalty of the poor Irish."

Victoria travelled through Ireland for 11 days, and was met even in Belfast – already struggling with sectarian divisions – by flags and banners bearing the motto *Cead Mille Failte*, 'a hundred thousand welcomes'. Harps and shamrocks were displayed alongside the Union Flag and the cross of Saint George, while other banners read 'God Save the Queen'.

Victoria later observed that "Cork is not all like an English town... the crowd is a noisy, excitable but a very good-natured one, running and pushing about, and laughing, talking and shrieking."

Despite the crisis that had engulfed Ireland, Victoria's visit revealed a degree of positivity that endured among its people.



Victoria is welcomed in Ireland in 1849 with music and dancing

GETTY IMAGES



The opulent reception held in 1855 in Victoria's honour in the Opera Room at Versailles

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

Versailles, France

Enjoying an emperor's extravagant hospitality

In August 1855, Victoria visited one of the most famously opulent places in the world: Versailles. The queen had accepted an invitation from the French emperor Napoleon III, in a public reconciliation between England and France that had been seeded during Napoleon's visit to London in April.

Victoria's sojourn began on 17 August at Dunkirk, where she and Albert were met by the emperor and escorted to Paris. It was the first time an English monarch had visited the French capital in four centuries (though Victoria had earlier visited Napoleon III's predecessor King Louis-Philippe at the Château d'Eu in Normandy in 1843 and 1845). To mark the occasion, the emperor arranged an ostentatious display, eager to repair the historically precarious relationship between Britain and France following the decisive and bloody battle of Waterloo only 40 years earlier.

On 25 August, a ball was held at Versailles in Victoria's honour. Four orchestras played by the light of hundreds of glittering chandeliers, ornamental candles and torches, while some 1,200 people danced beneath garlands of flowers that adorned the ceiling. The queen was whisked onto the dance floor by Napoleon, and Albert happily danced with the French empress Eugénie. The event was an extravaganza, and Victoria was left "deeply grateful for these very happy 8 days... The union of the 2 nations, as of the two Sovereigns, for a great friendship has sprung up between us, is of the greatest importance!"

She was left in no doubt of the French emperor's enduring respect for the British queen and her country.

Bavaria, Germany

In love with Albert's homeland

Victoria's beloved husband Albert was born in the Saxon duchy of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld in northern Bavaria, and his union with Victoria created the House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (renamed the House of Windsor in 1917 as a reaction to anti-German sentiment during the First World War). Perhaps unsurprisingly, following her first visit in 1845, Victoria developed a love for and affinity with Albert's birthplace, Coburg. Indeed, she visited the picturesque town so frequently that she was told she "could not rule the Empire from Coburg". Victoria confided in her diary that "If I weren't the person who I am, my home would be here."

Victoria's favourite place in the duchy was Schloss Rosenau, the small but romantic medieval castle in which Albert was born. Surrounded by lush, green woodland and blanketed with snow in the winter, it has a fairytale charm. However, on what would be his last visit to Coburg, in 1860, Albert reputedly had an awful premonition of his death and became convinced that he would never again return to his birthplace; he died of typhoid in 1861. In 1863, Victoria wrote to her unofficial private secretary, General Charles Grey, of her intention to mourn Albert at Coburg "to prevent further increase of depression and exhaustion". It was one of the few places to which Victoria travelled in the wake of Albert's death.

A colourised postcard of Schloss Rosenau, Albert's birthplace, from c1900



Lucerne, Switzerland

Following in Albert's footsteps in the Alps

After Albert's death, Victoria increasingly felt the need to find peace and quiet. In another letter to General Grey in 1865, Victoria expressed a wish to explore Switzerland: "though it is terrible to do or see anything without my beloved Albert, still I do long to see fine scenery". General Grey wrote that "the Queen does feel that she must try to spend 4 weeks in some completely quiet spot in Switzerland where she can refuse all visitors and have complete quiet".

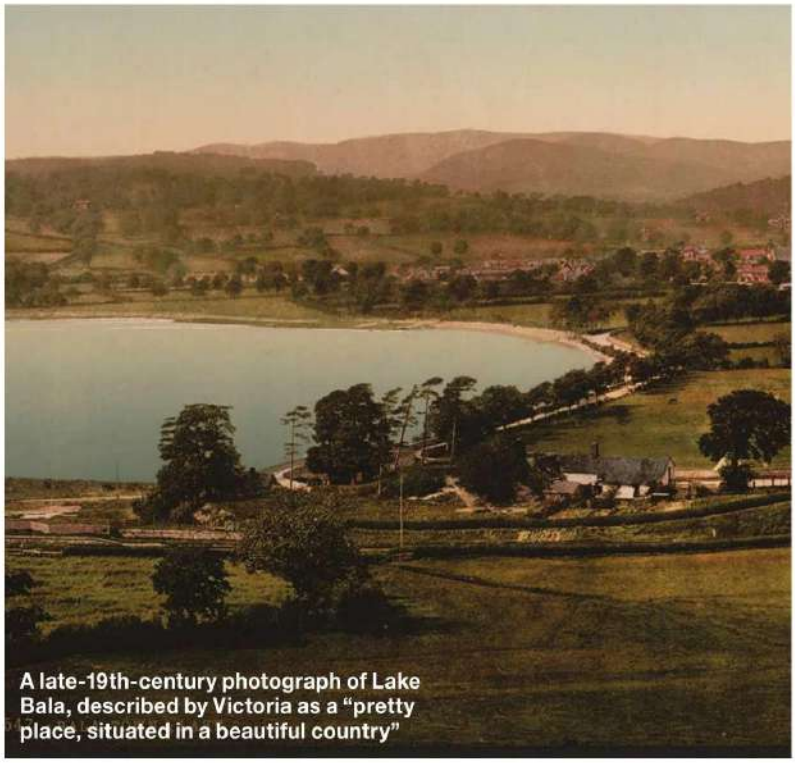
In August 1868, the royal yacht sailed to Cherbourg in France, and, after official engagements in Paris, the 'Countess of Kent' (Victoria aimed to travel incognito) took the French emperor Napoleon III's private train to Switzerland, heading towards Lucerne. There, a hillside villa – the Pension Wallis – had been rented for a month for the queen, who on arrival sat in an Alpine meadow, enjoying afternoon tea and admiring the mountainous scenery and lake view.

"Really, it was like what I had dreamt of, but could hardly believe to see it in reality!" she wrote. "How much dearest Albert wished I should see Switzerland, how he admired it, and how everything beautiful makes me think of him!"

In essence, Victoria's sojourn in Switzerland was part of her mourning. Albert had travelled to Switzerland 30 years previously; there he had plucked and pressed a rose, which he gave Victoria on his return to England, and which had become one of her most treasured possessions. Although Switzerland provided Victoria with an opportunity for peaceful rest, it was also an opportunity to feel close to Albert.

A sketch by Princess Louise shows Victoria ascending Mt Rigi, near Lucerne in central Switzerland, on a pony





A late-19th-century photograph of Lake Bala, described by Victoria as a "pretty place, situated in a beautiful country"

BRIDGEMAN-ROYAL COLLECTION TRUST © HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II, 2019/ALAMY

Wales

Visiting the late prince's biographer

Albert was eulogised in a biography, *Life of the Prince Consort,* written by Theodore Martin and published in 1875; the queen later knighted the author. Martin lived near Llangollen, north Wales, and in 1889 Victoria visited Llangollen en route to Balmoral. The queen had made only a handful of visits to Wales; the first, in 1832, was forced upon her by her mother, to get her acquainted with the country she would later reign over. On her later visit, however, she was struck by the natural beauty of the country, later lamenting that her son Bertie, Prince of Wales, did not visit himself: "It is very wrong of him not to come here. It is only five hours from London and… the Prince takes his title from this country, which is so beautiful."

Victoria arrived in Wales in late August, first travelling by carriage to Palé Hall, near Lake Bala. The Welsh landscape was at its most attractive, and the queen noted: "the drive to Bala was beautiful, through wooded roads, & the vegetation so luxurious". As her carriage sped past Lake Bala, she remarked that it was a "pretty place, situated in a beautiful country with hills thickly wooded & very undulating ground".

The queen was so impressed by the area's charm that she extended her stay to 10 days before boarding a train to Llangollen to reach Sir Theodore's home, Bryntysilio. This was an important motivation for her Welsh sojourn – a connection to Albert. She chose to spend the late prince's birthday, 26 August, at Bryntysilio, where Sir Theodore showed her the desk he worked at when compiling his detailed account of Albert's life. This brought her some comfort, as she noted on "this dear dear day, spent for the 27th time without my darling Husband, the light of my life. But if ever any one lived on, — he does, & his works do follow him! How daily one sees that."

The queen was struck by the **natural beauty of the country**



The queen driving in Grasse during her holiday on the French Riviera

Florence, Italy

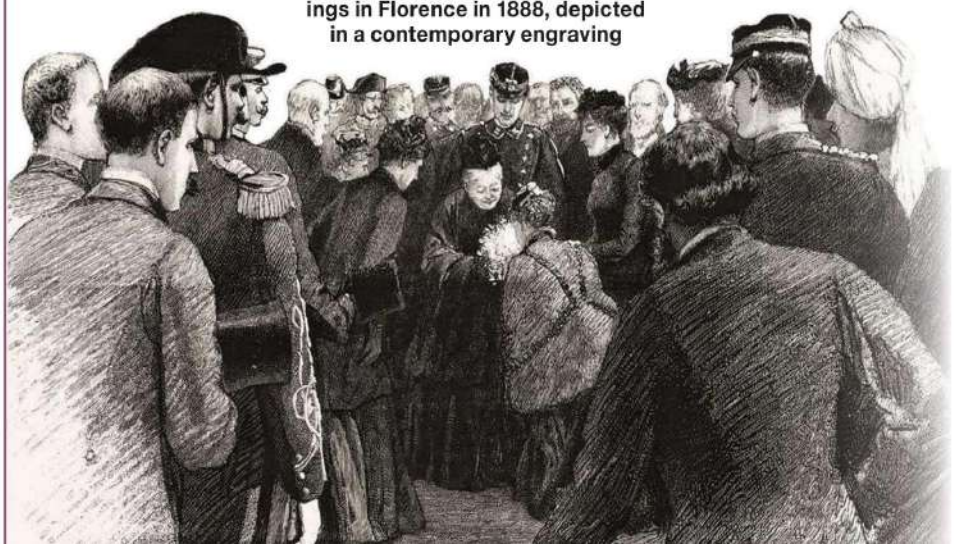
Discovering the artistic gems of the Italian Renaissance

Albert had a love of travel before he married Victoria, and had spent three months in Florence shortly before their wedding. In March 1888, almost half a century later, the queen arrived at Santa Maria Novella railway station, again travelling under a pseudonym – this time, the Countess of Balmoral. Her journey had been long and arduous for a lady approaching her 70th birthday; she had crossed the English Channel to Cherbourg on the royal yacht *Victoria and Albert*, then continued by steam train through "endless masses of olive trees, & most beautiful & extensive woods".

When her train finally pulled into Florence on 24 March, bands played the British national anthem and people whistled merrily, waving flags as her carriage passed. Victoria stayed at the Villa Palmieri at Fiesole, a few miles north-east of the city, during this and future visits to Florence. She was eager to see the "gems of Raphael, Titian, Correggio, Andrea del Sarto, Michael Angelo", and was guided around the museums by the curator of the Palazzo Pitti galleries, Marchese Ridolfi. Most of all, she loved to sketch panoramic views of the city, watching the sun set from her rooms; "The air was beautiful, as was also the view of the distant country," she wrote.

Of course, Victoria was eager to experience the places Albert had walked. "At 12, drove with Beatrice & Jane C. to the Badia, whither the Gentlemen had preceded us," she noted in her diary. "The interest to me of this Church, was that my darling Albert used to play on the organ here." Whether it was the connection to Albert that drew her back, or the city's beautiful art and surrounding landscapes, Victoria returned to Florence twice more.

Victoria arrives to effusive greetings in Florence in 1888, depicted in a contemporary engraving



ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

Provence, France

A warm welcome in the French Riviera

Even in old age, Victoria's love of travelling endured, reflected in words she uttered as she lay dying: "if only I were at Nice, I should recover."

For the last 20 years of her life, the queen found solace and comfort in the warmth of the French Riviera. She explored the region extensively, describing it as "this paradise of nature!"

Victoria stayed in Nice in five consecutive years, 1895 to 1899. She travelled with a large entourage numbering some 100 people. In 1897, 1898 and 1899 she dominated the entire west wing of the new Excelsior Hotel Regina, which had been furnished to accommodate her every need, including the installation of an electric lift. She enjoyed long drives in her carriage along the coast overlooking the "sea most beautiful and blue".

Victoria was happy in Nice; her diary describes a "splendid day" on 21 March 1895 spent on the Promenade des Anglais watching the flower parade Bataille de Fleurs (Battle of Flowers). "The sight was very gay & animated. The procession of cars & carriages, some extremely pretty, passed & re-passed close to us, showering masses of flowers into the carriage, & we also threw bunches of flowers w.ith which the Mayor had supplied us." H

Helen Carr is a historian, writer and broadcaster

"Albert made Victoria feel that she was inadequate – his intellectual and moral inferior"

To the outside world, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were the golden couple, exemplars of traditional family values. Yet, as **Jane Ridley** reveals, behind the romanticised veneer, Albert's thirst for power put the marriage under intense pressure



Victoria and Albert pictured in 1854. The prince's grip on power grew throughout their marriage





After the sudden and tragic death of Prince Albert in 1861, the grief-stricken Queen Victoria dedicated herself to memorialising her marriage as a perfect union. She herself composed large parts of the first biography, *The Early Years of the Prince Consort* (1867). At Frogmore, the royal burial ground at Windsor, she built a mausoleum and commissioned the sculptor Marochetti to create effigies of herself and the prince lying side-by-side – though it would be another 40 years before she took her place beside her beloved Albert. Thanks in part to the queen's efforts, her marriage to Albert, prince of the German duchy of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, came to be seen as one of the great love matches of all time, celebrated (with varying degrees of accuracy) in films such as *The Young Victoria* and, more recently, the ITV drama series *Victoria*.

As Queen Victoria's journal shows, from the moment she saw the prince arriving at the foot of the staircase at Windsor in 1839 on his second visit to England, she was smitten. Five days later she summoned him to her blue closet and proposed to him. But the marriage was not the romantic happy-ever-after story that Victoria constructed. It was far more complex than that.

Like all dynastic marriages, this was an alliance with a political agenda. As the second son of a minor German duke (Coburg is smaller than the Isle of Wight) and a mere Serene Highness, the lowest grade in the royal hierarchy, Prince Albert was Victoria's poor relation, though the two were first cousins. But what he lacked in rank and wealth, he made up for with education and self-confidence, and he had been trained from his teens by Leopold of Belgium, the cousins' mutual uncle, to marry Victoria and take over the British throne.

Albert began his quest for power immediately after the marriage. Within months he had moved his writing desk next to the queen's. At first, Victoria resisted Albert's attempts to remove her trusted governess, Baroness Lehzen, from control of the court. But as one pregnancy followed another in quick succession – seven of Victoria's nine children were born in the first 10 years of the marriage – the queen was in no condition to resist. Albert had Lehzen fired and assumed control of the household, introducing much-needed reforms and economies.

King in all but name

In November 1840, when her first child was born, Victoria gave Albert the key to the cabinet boxes. He started to attend meetings with ministers, dealing with the queen's correspondence and drafting business letters for the queen to copy out. At dinners with politicians, Albert could be heard prompting Victoria in German before she spoke. By now he had become her private secretary.

In 1850 he described his position thus: "As the natural head of [the queen's] family, superintendent of her household, manager of her private affairs, sole confidential adviser in politics, and only assistant in her communications with the officers of her government, he is, besides, the husband of the queen, the tutor of the royal children, the private secretary of the sovereign, and her permanent minister." Not only was Albert king in all but name, he also intervened in politics, pursuing an active role in foreign policy.

Victoria declared herself grateful to Albert for relieving her of the tiresome work of the sovereign. Women, she believed, were not fit

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Victoria and Albert's highs and lows



10 October 1839

Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, aged 20, arrives at Windsor **to visit Queen Victoria**, his first cousin, who is three months older than him.

15 October 1839

Victoria, who considers that Albert "is beautiful" and declares that "my heart is quite going", **proposes to Albert**. She tells no one beforehand, except the prime minister, Lord Melbourne.

10 February 1840

Victoria and Albert are married at the Chapel Royal, St James's.



Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in court dress, 1854

21 November 1840

Vicky, Victoria's first child, is born. Around this time, Victoria gives Albert **the keys to the cabinet boxes.**

9 November 1841

Birth of Albert Edward (Bertie), Prince of Wales. This is followed by the birth of Alice, 25 April 1843; Alfred, 6 August 1844; Helena, 25 May 1846; Louise, 18 March 1848; and Arthur, 1 May 1850 – seven children in 10 years.

1842

Baroness Lehzen (above), Victoria's former governess, who has been charged with the running of the court, is dismissed. Albert takes over and introduces important reforms, making the court **more efficient and cutting waste.**



An idealised family portrait by Sir Edwin Landseer, dated 1840–43, shows Victoria and Albert with their first daughter Vicky in the White Drawing Room at Windsor Castle

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Victoria declared herself grateful to Albert for relieving her of her tiresome work. **Women, she believed, were not fit to rule**

to rule. "It is a reversal of the right order of things which distresses me much and which no one, but such a perfection, such an angel as he is – could bear and carry through." But Victoria had steely will, and her commitment to her birthright was absolute. She was torn between her passionate desire to be a perfect 'Victorian' wife to Albert – an angel in the house, all sweetness and light – and her Hanoverian inheritance.

The royals retreat

The image of the Victorian monarchy, crafted by Albert, and projected in paintings such as Winterhalter's *The Royal Family in 1846* (see page 36), was one of a child-centred bourgeois family on the throne. But the fact was that the royal marriage was unlike any other. It took place within the peculiar context of the court.

As a young maid of honour in Victoria's court in the 1850s, Mary Bulteel would watch the door silently close on the queen's private apartments. How she longed to get to know the queen, her employer, but Victoria barely spoke to her.

The withdrawal of the royal family from the public space of the court into the private apartments was Albert's doing. It meant that Victoria's life was no longer bounded by the court, as it had been in the early days of her reign when her court was a Camelot, famed for its parties and youthful high spirits. The creation of a private sphere – of a space dedicated to domestic life – was one of the most far-reaching changes made by Albert in his drive to reform the monarchy.

Disliking London, with its late nights, and sneered at by the aristocracy as a German beggar, Albert persuaded Victoria that her enjoyment of society was wrong. True happiness, he claimed, was to be found in the country with her beloved prince and their young family. Albert designed the new family home at Osborne on the Isle of Wight, safely inaccessible from a prying public. Even more remote was Balmoral, the castle he created in the Scottish Highlands, 500 miles from London.

At Osborne or Balmoral the family could live the simple outdoors life that Victoria later depicted in her *Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands* (1868). Victoria believed her "happy domestic home" made her more popular than any other sovereign and gave a good example to her subjects.

At court, Albert introduced new rules, distancing the royal family from the household – that is, the courtiers and officeholders such as the Lord Chamberlain. He ordered that no man was to sit in the presence of the queen. Throughout Victoria's reign, prime ministers stood during audiences; only two were accorded the special privilege of sitting in the queen's presence – her favourite, Disraeli, who declined the offer, and Lord Salisbury, who was too heavy to stand. The hated Gladstone was never asked to sit, even in his eighties.

Albert forbade maids of honour from sitting in his presence or speaking to him

1842

Albert starts to attend the queen's meetings with ministers, and writes notes of the meetings. Victoria now talks of "We", not "I".

1845-51

Osborne on the Isle of Wight is built **under Albert's supervision** as a holiday retreat for the royal family.



Osborne, the royal retreat on the Isle of Wight, shown in a colourised photograph from 1890

7 April

1853



Leopold (above, c1863) is born. Beatrice follows on 14 April 1857, completing the family.

1853-56

Balmoral Castle is built, once more under Albert's supervision. Here the family **enjoy a romantic mountain life** that reminds Albert of his native Germany.

1857

Victoria makes Albert Prince Consort, second only to the queen. This gives him **precedence over everyone**, including his son, the Prince of Wales.

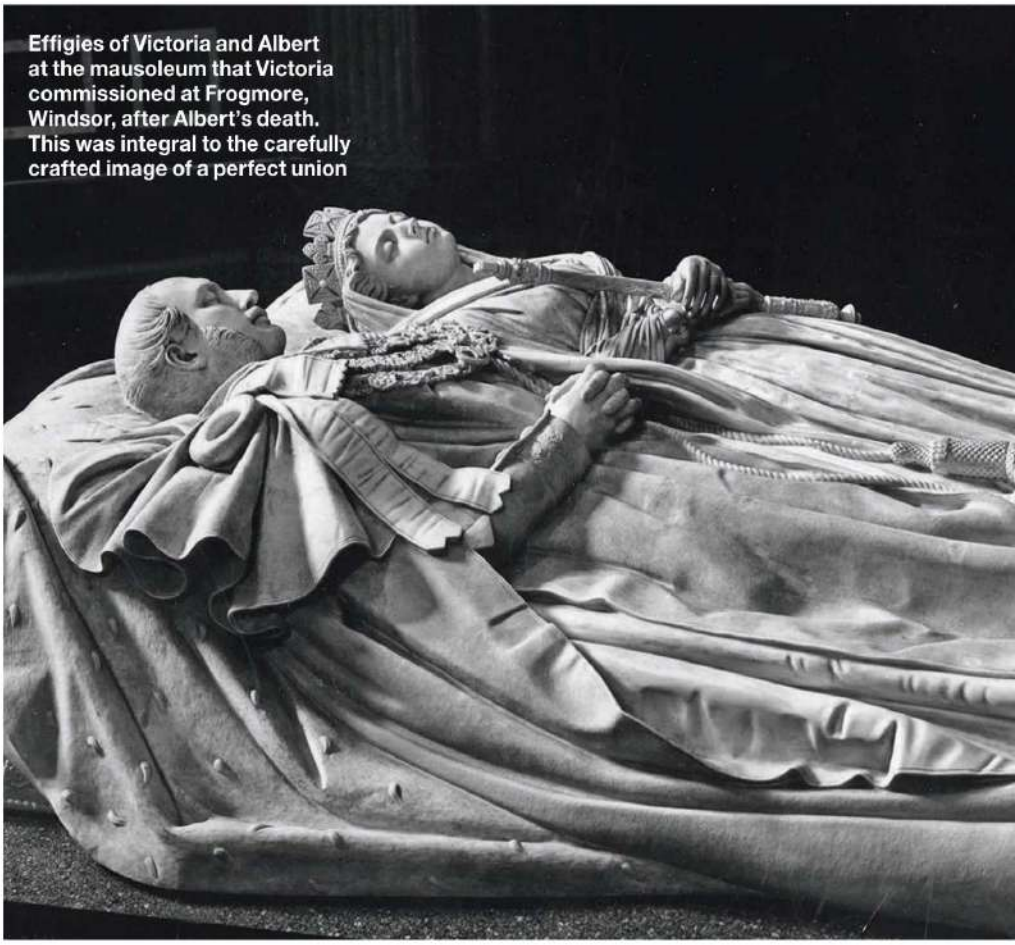
14 December

1861

Albert dies at Windsor, aged 42. The **cause of death was reportedly typhoid fever**, but modern historians speculate that he suffered from an underlying illness such as stomach cancer or Crohn's disease.



Queen Victoria pictured in 1861, the year of Albert's death



Effigies of Victoria and Albert at the mausoleum that Victoria commissioned at Frogmore, Windsor, after Albert's death. This was integral to the carefully crafted image of a perfect union

unless spoken to. Wherever he went he was attended by an equerry, thus emphasising his royal status. In his relations with the courtiers of the household, Albert was cold and stiff. "His way of giving orders and reproofs was rather too like a master of a house scolding servants to be pleasant for those who were bound to listen in silence," wrote Mary Bulteel. People noticed that the prince made not a single friend among ministers or the household. Such reserve in so young a man was "unpleasant", thought Mary: "It implied something of the cold egotism which seems to chill you in all royalties."

Memoirs of ladies-in-waiting concur that Albert was "detested" because he was "so stiff", especially with women. Victoria, on the other hand, was adored because of her disarming frankness and her unquenchable curiosity and interest in the affairs of everyone around her.

Albert's cold manner derived in part from his upbringing at the small German court of Coburg. When Mary Bulteel visited Coburg in 1860, she found the court far stiffer than in Britain, and the equerries and household much more "collapsed before these little sovereigns than we are before the queen".

One result of withdrawing from the court was that the royal couple were closer to their ordinary servants than they were to the aristocratic courtiers of the household. This is perhaps why, after Albert's death, Victoria became intimate first with her Highland servant John Brown, and later with her Indian servant Abdul Karim – relationships that the courtiers found especially upsetting because they overturned the protocol of the court.

Shadow side of marriage

Behind the closed doors of the private apartments, Victoria was often irritable and moody. She bitterly resented what she called "the shadow side of marriage", meaning pregnancy and childbirth, and suffered from postnatal depression. And she disliked babies, who she thought were "mere little plants for the first six months".

Victoria's 'nerves' became worse during the 1850s. Her last two pregnancies were marked by emotional scenes. Albert was advised by the royal doctors that the queen's mood swings and violent Hanoverian tempers were symptoms that she had inherited the madness of her grandfather, George III. Rather than engage, Albert walked away and, as his wife stormed out of the room in a fury, the prince composed letters reprimanding her for unreasonable behaviour. "If you are violent I have no other choice but to leave you… and retire to my room in order to give you time to recover yourself, then you follow me to renew the dispute and have it all out," he wrote.

Victoria kept a notebook in which she recorded her tempers, her selfishness, and her loss of self-control. Albert would read her confessions and issue her with a 'certificate' of improvement, reviewing her behaviour as he might a child.

Albert's intentions were no doubt good. He was certainly a loyal and faithful husband. Victoria's adoration of her beloved was undimmed. But she was made to feel that she was inadequate, his intellectual and moral inferior. "I owe everything to dearest papa," she told her daughter. "He was my father, my protector, my guide and adviser in all and everything, my mother (I might almost say) as well as my husband."

This was not a marriage of equals. It was as if the only way the couple could live with the anomaly (as they saw it) of Victoria being a woman on the throne and superior in rank to her husband was by making her feel that she was Albert's inferior in every other respect. This artifice imposed unbearable stresses upon them both. Little wonder Victoria lost her temper now and then.

Albert's reaction was to escape into work. In the 1850s, he consistently rose early in the morning to deal with his growing amount of paperwork. His meddling in politics made him unpopular in the country, and he became a lonely, unhappy figure. Photographs show him prematurely aged, balding and careworn. Queen Victoria's tragedy was that Albert's death, aged 42, meant that these tensions were never resolved. H

Albert would read Victoria's confessions and issue her with a 'certificate' of improvement, **reviewing her behaviour as he might a child**

Jane Ridley is professor of history at the University of Buckingham and author of several works on the Victorian era

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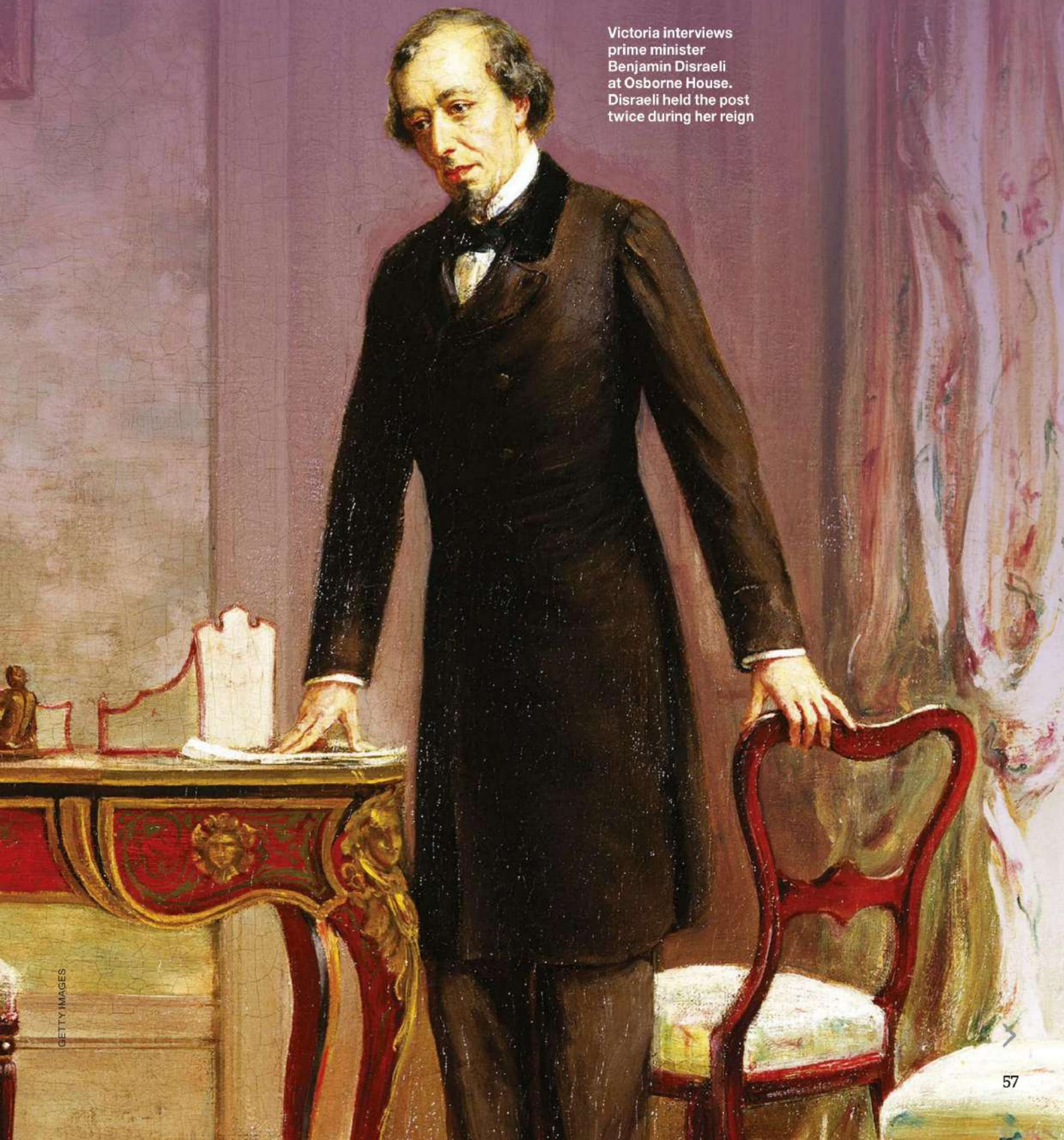
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The monarch and her MINISTERS

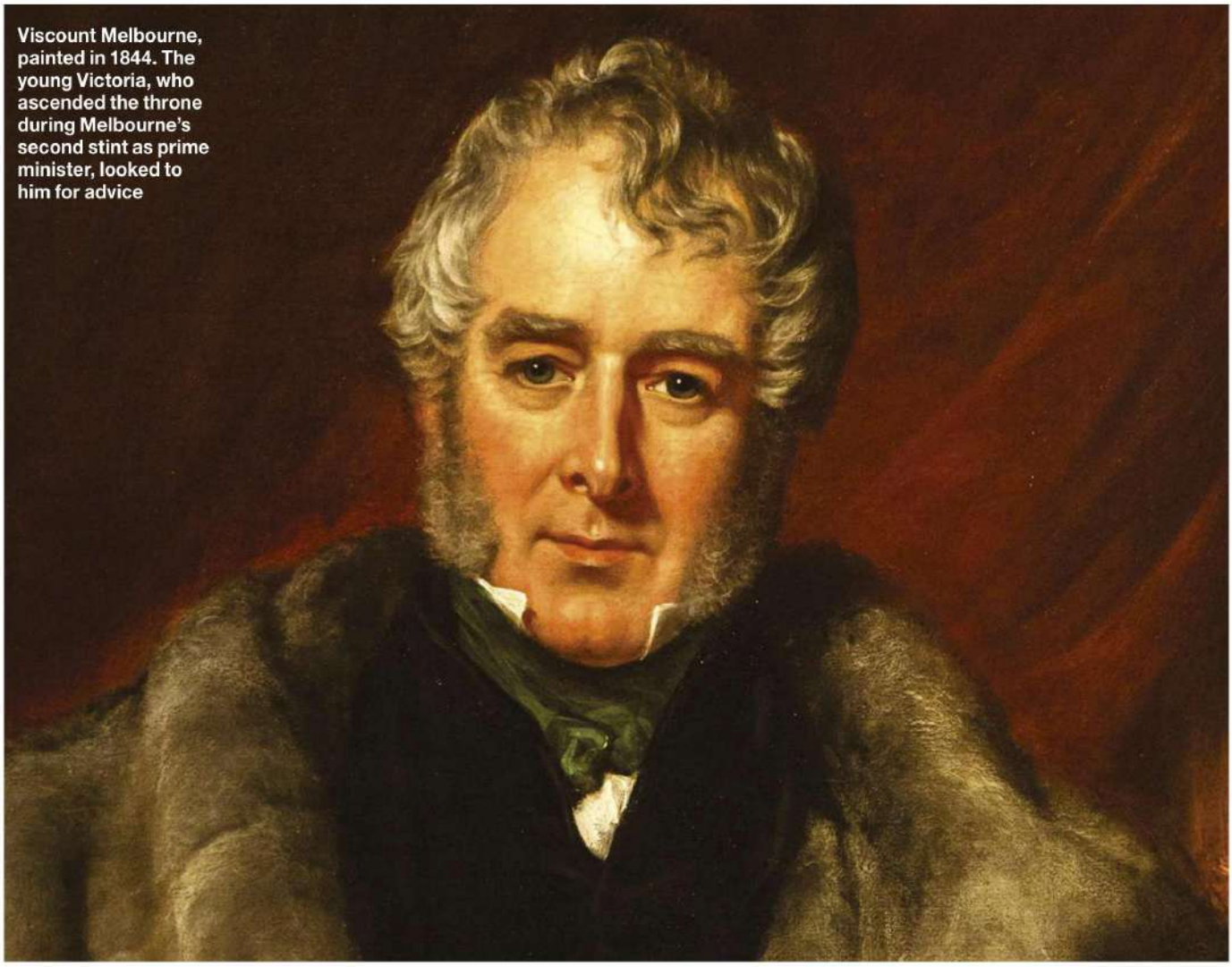


During her long reign, Victoria dealt with 10 prime ministers – some of whom she admired, while others provoked her ire. **Jane Ridley** profiles six of the most important premiers of the Victorian era



Victoria interviews prime minister Benjamin Disraeli at Osborne House. Disraeli held the post twice during her reign

GETTY IMAGES



Viscount Melbourne, painted in 1844. The young Victoria, who ascended the throne during Melbourne's second stint as prime minister, looked to him for advice

Viscount Melbourne In office: 1834 and 1835–41

The trusted father figure

William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne, was prime minister at the time of Victoria's accession, having succeeded Earl Grey as leader of the Whig government in 1834. The 18-year-old queen instantly warmed to the debonair 58-year-old widower, and the intimacy that grew between them is charted in the queen's journals (available online at *queenvictoriasjournals.org*). Victoria saw Lord M, as she called him, almost every day.

Victoria had never known her father, the Duke of Kent, who died when she was just eight months old, and Melbourne provided the father figure she craved. He took Victoria's side in her quarrel with her mother, and enabled her to achieve independence from her controlling mother.

Melbourne played a pivotal role in teaching Victoria how to be queen, and in educating her about British politics. He also acted as her private secretary, drafting her business letters and advising on appointments. Because of this, the monarchy came to be identified with the Whigs, and Victoria believed that Melbourne was her minister. She failed fully to grasp that ministers were appointed by parliament, not by the monarch.

In 1839, Melbourne resigned office, and Sir Robert Peel attempted to form a Tory government. Peel asked the queen to appoint Tory ladies of the bedchamber as a sign of her confidence in his government. When she refused to replace her incumbent Whig ladies, Peel refused to form a government. In a breach of the constitution, she wrote to Melbourne, the outgoing prime minister, asking for his advice. This 'bedchamber crisis' was a constitutional milestone – the last time that a monarch blocked the appointment of a new government.

> Melbourne played a pivotal role in teaching Victoria how to be queen, and in **educating her about British politics**

The 'bedchamber crisis' had in part been sparked by a scandal that had erupted earlier that year surrounding the treatment of Lady Flora Hastings. This unmarried lady-in-waiting (who was a Tory) was accused of being pregnant; Victoria believed that the 'father' was John Conroy, her mother's favourite, whom the queen had long loathed. In fact doctors found Hastings was not pregnant: she was gravely ill with liver cancer, and died at Buckingham Palace in July 1839.

The queen's callous treatment of her erstwhile lady-in-waiting made Victoria deeply unpopular – along with Melbourne, who seemed to the public to be cruelly partisan in the matter.

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

Victoria found Peel "a cold, unfeeling, disagreeable man", and **she did not welcome him as prime minister**





A political cartoon satirises the impact of income tax, introduced by Robert Peel in 1842 LEFT **Robert Peel's work ethic and social conscience appealed to Prince Albert, and Victoria grew to respect the prime minister**

Sir Robert Peel 1841–46

Albert's hardworking ally

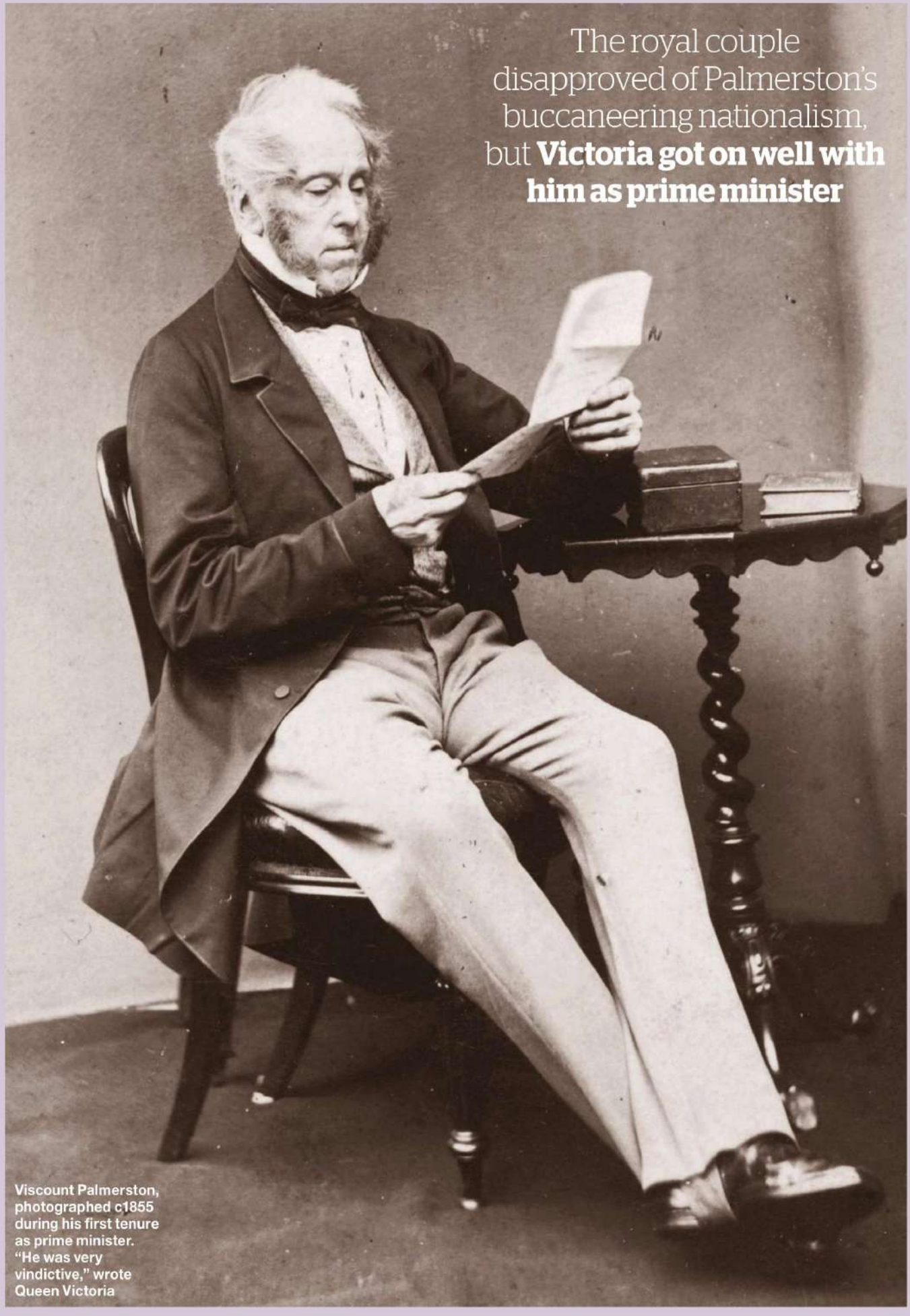
The son of a cotton-mill owner, Peel created the modern Conservative party, pitching his appeal at the political centre. At the time of the 'bedchamber crisis', Victoria had found Peel "a cold, unfeeling, disagreeable man", and she did not welcome him as prime minister when he won the 1841 election. Disregarding the rules, Victoria then continued to correspond with the outgoing PM, Lord Melbourne.

After Victoria married Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha in 1840, the prince became the power behind the throne. He taught Victoria to avoid party politics, promoting the idea that the monarchy should stand above such things. However, Albert liked and admired Peel; both were hard-working, able administrators who disapproved of gambling, drinking and dissolute aristocrats. Like Peel, Albert was religious, he had a social conscience, and he cared about the poor.

Peel recognised Albert's abilities, and he saw the need to give the prince something useful to do; in 1841 he thus appointed Albert chairman of the Fine Arts Committee, responsible for commissioning the history paintings in the new Houses of Parliament.

Thanks to Albert, Victoria's relations with Peel were harmonious. "My relations with Her Majesty are most satisfactory," wrote Peel. He considered that the queen had "an exact understanding of the relation of a Constitutional Sovereign to her advisers". When Peel reintroduced income tax in 1842, Victoria (at his suggestion) agreed to pay the new tax in order to set an example, though she was not obliged to do so. When Albert and Victoria told Peel that they wanted a place of their own where they could enjoy family life, Peel suggested Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, and helped to ensure that the purchase went through.

When Peel was defeated following the repeal of the corn laws (import tariffs that kept the price of wheat artificially high in Britain) in 1846, Victoria was almost as unhappy as she had been when Melbourne resigned.



The royal couple disapproved of Palmerston's buccaneering nationalism, but **Victoria got on well with him as prime minister**

Viscount Palmerston, photographed c1855 during his first tenure as prime minister. "He was very vindictive," wrote Queen Victoria

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

Viscount Palmerston

1855–58 and 1859–65

The Albert-baiting nationalist

A jaunty aristocrat, a cynic and a philanderer (he was cited in divorce proceedings at the age of 79), Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston, was the sort of man of whom Albert disapproved. However, his grasp of foreign policy was unrivalled, he had an enormous appetite for work, and he used his connections with the press to gain popularity. As foreign secretary, Palmerston had angered Albert by welcoming the 1848 uprisings in Germany, France, Austria and other European states. The royal couple also disapproved of Palmerston's buccaneering nationalism, visible, for example, when he sent gunboats to threaten Greece without informing the queen. She managed to ensure he was forced to resign from that post.

When he became prime minister in 1855 during the Crimean War, at the age of 70, Victoria was not best pleased, but she had no choice – Palmerston was the only candidate for the job who was not identified with the failures of the war. Surprisingly, perhaps, Victoria got on well with Lord Palmerston during his first tenure and, after victory in Crimea was achieved in 1856, she recognised his efforts with the Order of the Garter.

Palmerston was prime minister when Albert died in 1861, and he made no demands on Victoria when she retreated into mourning. She emerged from seclusion briefly in 1863, when Prussia and Austria declared war on Denmark over the region of Schleswig-Holstein. Convinced that she was doing what Albert would have wished (why, she wailed, could he not be here "to write those admirable memoranda"?), Victoria supported Prussia, overruling Palmerston and foreign secretary Lord Russell's policy of mediating between Prussia and Denmark. Victoria complained bitterly about "those two dreadful old men".

When Palmerston died in office in 1865, Victoria wrote: "I never liked him, or could ever the least respect him, nor could I forget his conduct … to my Angel. He was very vindictive, and personal feelings influenced his political activity very much."



The queen walks with Disraeli at Hughenden, his country retreat in Buckinghamshire. Victoria initially loathed Disraeli, but he won her over with flattery

Benjamin Disraeli

1868 and 1874–80

The flatterer

Disraeli was a novelist and adventurer who rose to the Tory leadership as a result of the brilliant speeches he made destroying Peel over the issue of repealing the corn laws in 1846. He became prime minister of a minority Conservative government in 1868, but didn't win an election till 1874. Disraeli was Britain's first – and, to date, only – Jewish prime minister, though he was baptised as a Christian aged 12, when his father quarrelled with the synagogue.

Disraeli played an elaborate game of courtly flattery with the queen. Using his novelist's skills, he won her confidence by writing flowery letters, seemingly telling her everything and admitting her to the inner circle of government. Never in her life had she had such letters, reported the queen – now she knew everything. She rewarded her gouty PM by inviting him to sit during audiences – an unprecedented privilege, though he declined it: prime ministers were expected to stand while the queen sat.

At Victoria's behest, Disraeli passed the Royal Titles Act (1876) making her Empress of India. This measure was unpopular in Britain, but it was an inspired way of implying a direct link between the queen and her Indian subjects. During the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–8, Victoria frantically urged Disraeli to "give those horrid Russians… such a beating", and Disraeli had to use all his diplomatic skills to restrain her. His flattery was partly tongue-in-cheek: behind her back he called Victoria the "faery" – though by that time the stout little queen was far from faery-like.

After Albert died, the monarchy experienced a crisis as a result of Victoria's persistent mourning and refusal to appear in public. Disraeli understood that, rather than bully or confront the queen, the way to manage her was to charm her. "I never deny, I never contradict; I sometimes forget," he said.

Disraeli played an elaborate game of courtly flattery with the queen, **winning her confidence by writing flowery letters**



William Gladstone meets Queen Victoria in a contemporary painting. She described him as "a most disagreeable person – half crazy"

William Ewart Gladstone

1868–74, 1880–85, 1886 and 1892–94

"A very alarming lookout"

Arguably Britain's greatest 19th-century politician, Gladstone combined progressive Liberal politics with respect for traditional institutions. No republican, his intention was to reform the monarchy, but somehow it all went wrong – and he became Victoria's least favourite prime minister.

Gladstone's rift with the queen dated from 1870, when discontent with Victoria's public invisibility in mourning sparked a republican movement and led to claims that the queen didn't do enough to deserve the civil list, her annual grant from parliament. Gladstone therefore embarked on a mission to reform the queen. This was the last thing Queen Victoria wanted, and when he arrived at Balmoral she refused to see him for several days. Gladstone deluged the queen with 30-page letters, to which Victoria replied with a single sentence of pencil scrawl. Mr Gladstone, she complained, treated her like a public meeting; she found him impossible to deal with, overbearing and domineering. Gladstone, a devoted monarchist, had been warned to avoid confrontation with the queen, but he ignored the advice.

Gladstone's second government began badly, when Victoria refused at first to ask him to form a government, even though the Liberal party had won the election with a large majority. She claimed that appointing Gladstone would cause a lowering of the country's credit abroad. The truth was that Victoria failed to recognise the extent to which power had shifted from the monarch to the electorate. There was no way she could block Gladstone as she had kept out Peel over the 'bedchamber crisis'.

> Gladstone embarked on a mission to reform the queen... when he arrived at Balmoral **she refused to see him for several days**

By that point she was seriously estranged from Gladstone, whom she called "a most disagreeable person – half crazy and so excited". She reprimanded him for the strong language he used in his public speeches. She bombarded him with letters and telegrams, to which the prime minister replied with lengthy memoranda. "The queen alone is enough to kill any man," groaned Gladstone.

He became prime minister for the fourth time in 1892, aged 82. Victoria found the deaf, pale-faced statesman "a very alarming lookout" – and perhaps she was right.

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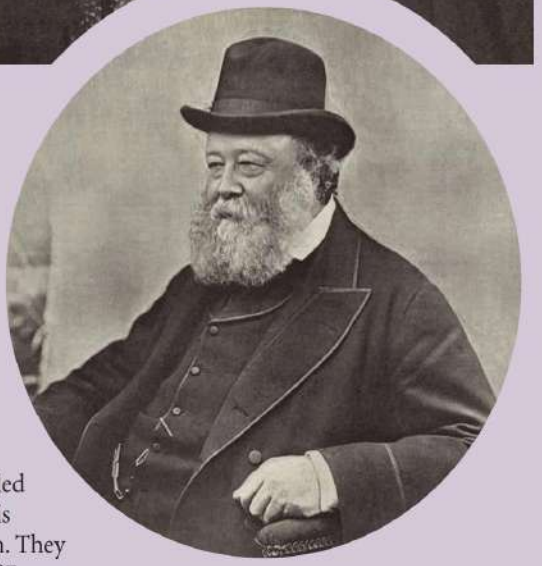
Lord Salisbury (hatless, third from left) joins the Prince of Wales (far left) at a garden party for the Shah of Iran in 1889
INSET Salisbury, who was heavily overweight, was permitted to sit during audiences with the queen

BRIDGEMAN

Lord Salisbury

1885–86, 1886–92 & 1895–1902

The personal friend



Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury, was a Tory aristocrat and intellectual who dominated late-19th-century politics – he was prime minister for nearly 14 years in total. A huge, obese man with a great domed head, he was physically clumsy but intellectually nimble, a depressive and a pessimist.

The queen and Salisbury agreed politically, respected one another and enjoyed and valued each other's company. He once remarked that, when he knew what the queen thought about something, he knew pretty well what view the public would take – she "had an extraordinary knowledge of what her people would think".

Salisbury combined his role at the Foreign Office with his position as prime minister, and he found the queen's experience and family connections a useful source of advice and intelligence. By that time, Victoria was the 'grandmama of Europe', with an extended dynastic family. She invited Tsar Nicholas II of Russia (her grandson-in-law) to Balmoral for talks with Salisbury, and she was the only person who could control the temper tantrums of her grandson Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany.

Victoria gave Salisbury special privileges. He was allowed to sit during audiences, because his legs could not support his weight. When he stayed at Balmoral – which he called Siberia on account of the cold – his room was specially heated for him. They both took holidays in the south of France, where Victoria took tea with her prime minister in his villa; it's clear that they were fond of each other.

Sometimes, though, the queen was hard to manage. When her household rebelled over her alleged favouritism towards her Indian servant Abdul Karim, her 'Munshi' (teacher), who had arrived in Britain for her golden jubilee in 1887, Salisbury was called in to sort things out. He refused to let the matter endanger his working relationship with the queen, remarking that "she really likes the emotional excitement, as being the only form of excitement she can have". Victoria's death in January 1901 was a huge blow to Salisbury, who had come to see the queen as a personal friend. H

> The queen and Salisbury agreed politically, respected one another **and enjoyed and valued each other's company**

Jane Ridley is professor of history at the University of Buckingham and author of several works on the Victorian era

DISCOVER MORE

BOOK

▶ **Victoria (Penguin Monarchs): Queen, Matriarch, Empress**
by Jane Ridley (Allen Lane, 2015)



The marble statue of Queen Victoria at Kensington Palace, designed by her daughter Princess Louise in 1893

VICTORIA'S GREAT PALACES

Explore five of the queen's grandest and most significant homes

WORDS: **VICTORIA ARBITER & PAUL BLOOMFIELD**



Kensington Palace, redeveloped in 1689 for William III and Mary II, and currently the home of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge

Kensington Palace

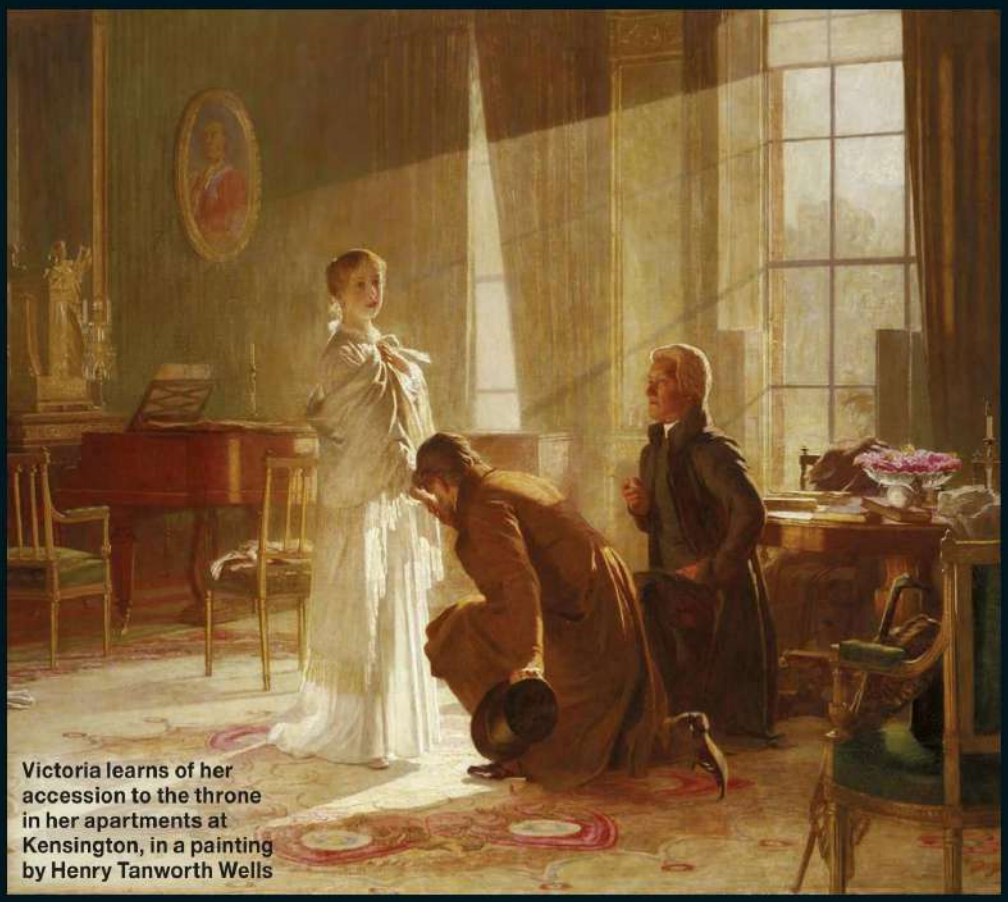
Victoria's childhood home

In 1689, newly crowned monarchs William III and Mary II chose Nottingham House as a new retreat close to, but pleasantly removed from, urban London. It was rapidly redeveloped into Kensington Palace, and the royal couple were installed in December that year. The palace was enlarged during the reign of George I; his successor's wife, Queen Caroline, shaped the design of the gardens.

George III disliked the palace, but granted apartments to royal family members including Edward, Duke of Kent, whose wife Victoire gave birth to the future Queen Victoria here in 1819. Kept largely secluded in the palace by her mother, Victoria was still living here in 1837 when her uncle King William IV died and she ascended the throne.

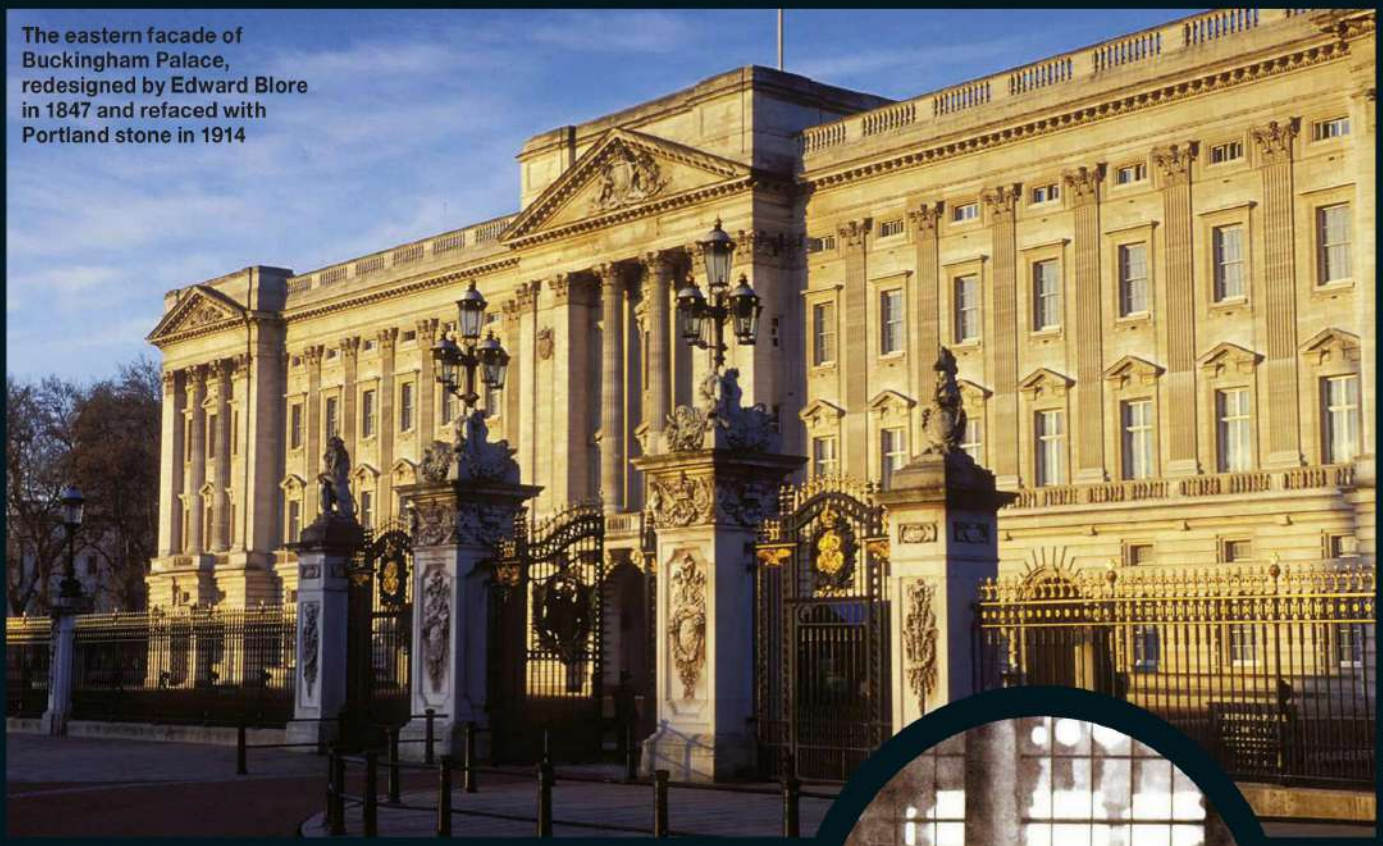
Victoria departed to live in Buckingham Palace shortly after her accession, but two of her daughters later lived here: the youngest, Beatrice, and Louise, a talented sculptor who created the statue of Victoria at the West Front. The palace has since been home to a number of royal families, including the current Prince of Wales, Diana and their sons William and Harry.

hrp.org.uk/kensington-palace



Victoria learns of her accession to the throne in her apartments at Kensington, in a painting by Henry Tanworth Wells

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The eastern facade of Buckingham Palace, redesigned by Edward Blore in 1847 and refaced with Portland stone in 1914

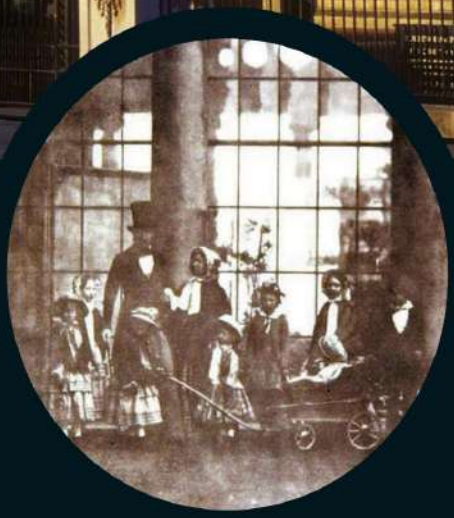
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Buckingham Palace

A capital idea

King George III bought Buckingham House, as it was then known, for his wife Queen Charlotte in 1761 as a family home. But it was his son George IV who commissioned architect John Nash to transform it into a grand palace in the 1820s. Queen Victoria moved into the palace in 1837, becoming the first British monarch to use it as their official London residence. The balcony has become famous as the focus of celebrations including royal weddings and jubilees; it was Victoria who first used it to make a public appearance in 1851 during the opening of the Great Exhibition, in nearby Hyde Park, co-organised by Prince Albert.

royal.uk

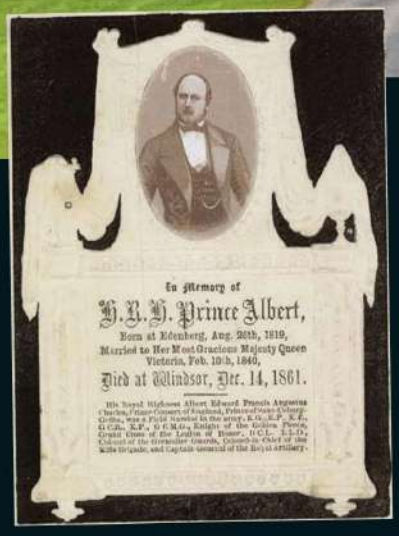




ABOVE **Albert, Victoria and their eight oldest children photographed at Buckingham Palace in 1854**
LEFT **Queen Victoria's private sitting room in Buckingham Palace, c1870–1900**

The Long Walk leads south from the George IV Gateway of Windsor Castle into the Great Park

ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN



A memorial card issued on the death of Prince Albert at Windsor Castle on 14 December 1861

Windsor Castle

The honeymooners' hideout

Construction of the world's oldest and largest occupied castle was begun by William the Conqueror in 1070. Over the following nine and a half centuries it has been home to 40 British sovereigns.

Describing it as "prison-like", Victoria preferred to light the castle with candles rather than newfangled electrical lighting, and famously kept it cold and draughty. Nonetheless, it was a favoured family home – indeed, Victoria and Albert spent their honeymoon here. In 1861, Albert succumbed to illness, possibly typhoid, in the Blue Room (also called the Albert Room). He was buried in a mausoleum at Frogmore Estate in Windsor Home Park, near the castle.

There are many reminders of Victoria's time in Windsor, including the imposing statue on Castle Hill commemorating her golden jubilee, and the marble statue in the castle's vestibule depicting the queen with her favourite collie, Sharp – one of no fewer than 88 dogs she had during her lifetime.

rct.uk/visit/windsorcastle



Osborne's Italianate architecture and gardens were the brainchild of Prince Albert





THIS PICTURE **The Swiss Cottage in the grounds of Osborne, built in 1853–54 for the royal children to learn how to run a house**
LEFT **The miniature grocer's shop used by Victoria's children in the Swiss Cottage**

ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN

Osborne

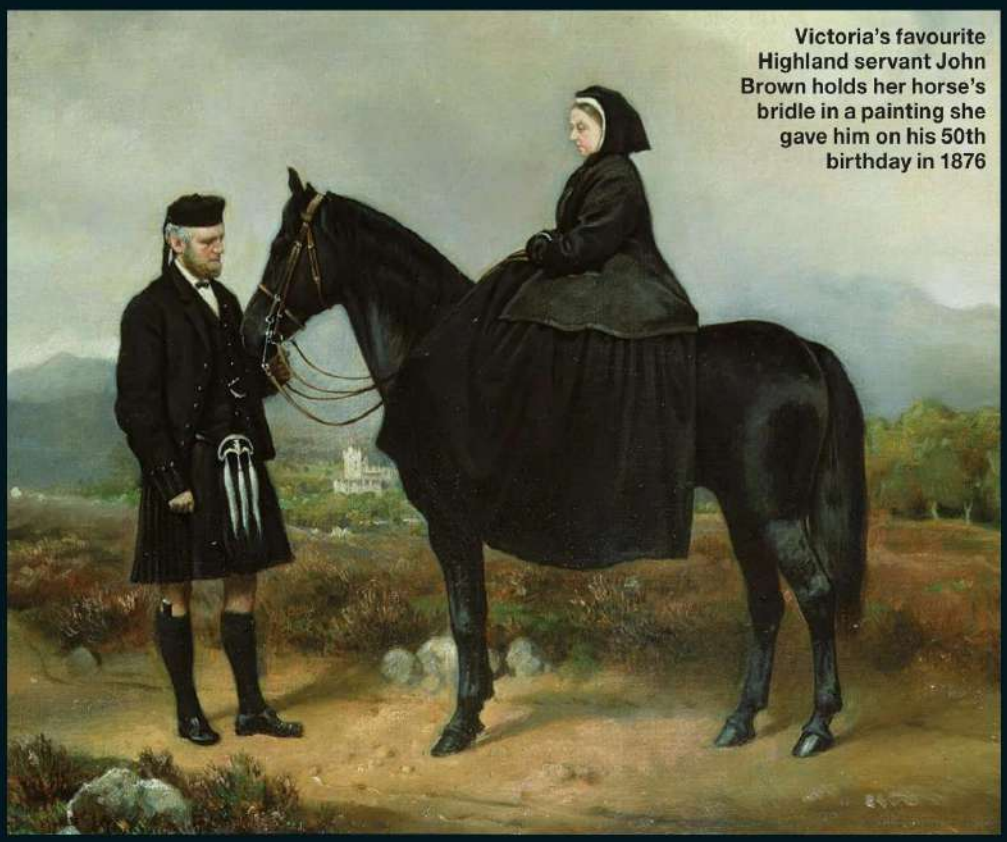
Island hideaway

Victoria and Albert bought the Osborne estate on the Isle of Wight in 1845, demolishing the existing house and replacing it with a grand Italianate 'palazzo' built under Albert's supervision. The Pavilion provided a royal retreat for Victoria, Albert and their growing family. Further additions were made after Albert's death in 1861, most notably the richly decorated Durbar Wing, inspired by Indian style; the Durbar Room, with its extravagant peacock overmantel, was designed by Lockwood Kipling, father of the poet and author Rudyard.

english-heritage.org.uk/osborne



Balmoral Castle, designed by Scottish architect William Smith, was built of local granite from 1853



Victoria's favourite Highland servant John Brown holds her horse's bridle in a painting she gave him on his 50th birthday in 1876

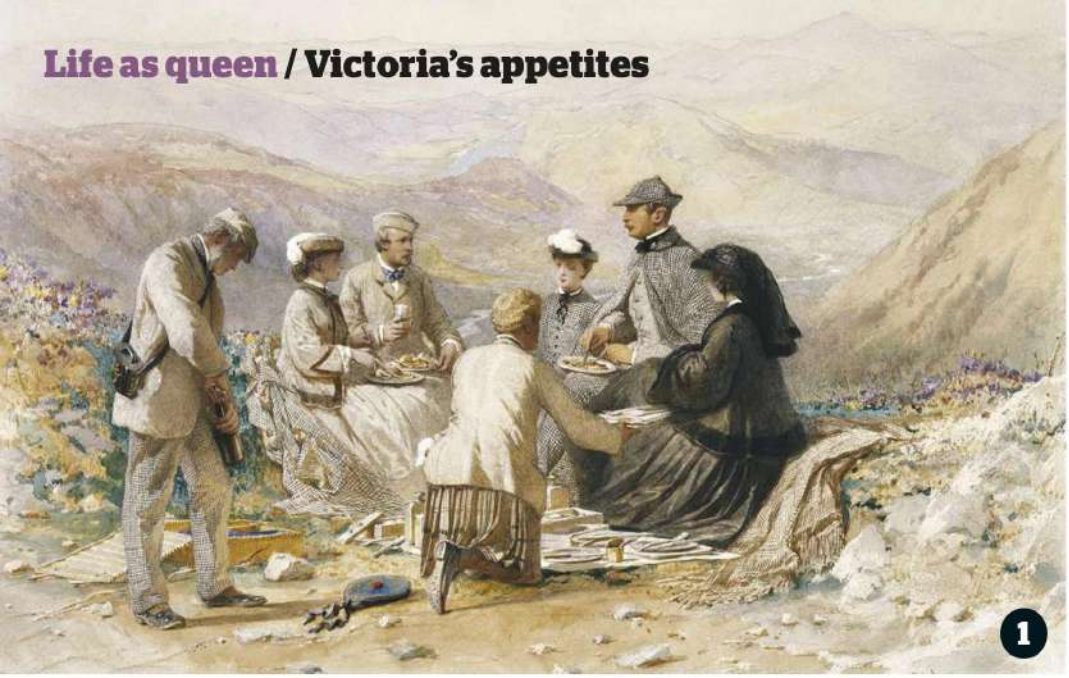
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Balmoral Castle

Scottish retreat

Victoria and Albert bought the Balmoral estate by the river Dee in Aberdeenshire in 1852, and the following year began building a grand Scottish baronial castle to replace the smaller existing building, landscaping the grounds and adding a model farm. After Albert's death, Victoria spent increasing periods at Balmoral, often staying at Glas-allt-Shiel lodge, her "widow's house"; here, a close relationship with ghillie John Brown burgeoned till his own death in 1883. Subsequently, her later favourite Abdul Karim also stayed with her at the lodge. The current Queen, Prince Philip and the Prince of Wales often stay at Balmoral, with the Duke of Edinburgh in particular taking a keen interest in the running of the estate and gardens.

royal.uk/royal-residences-balmoral-castle H



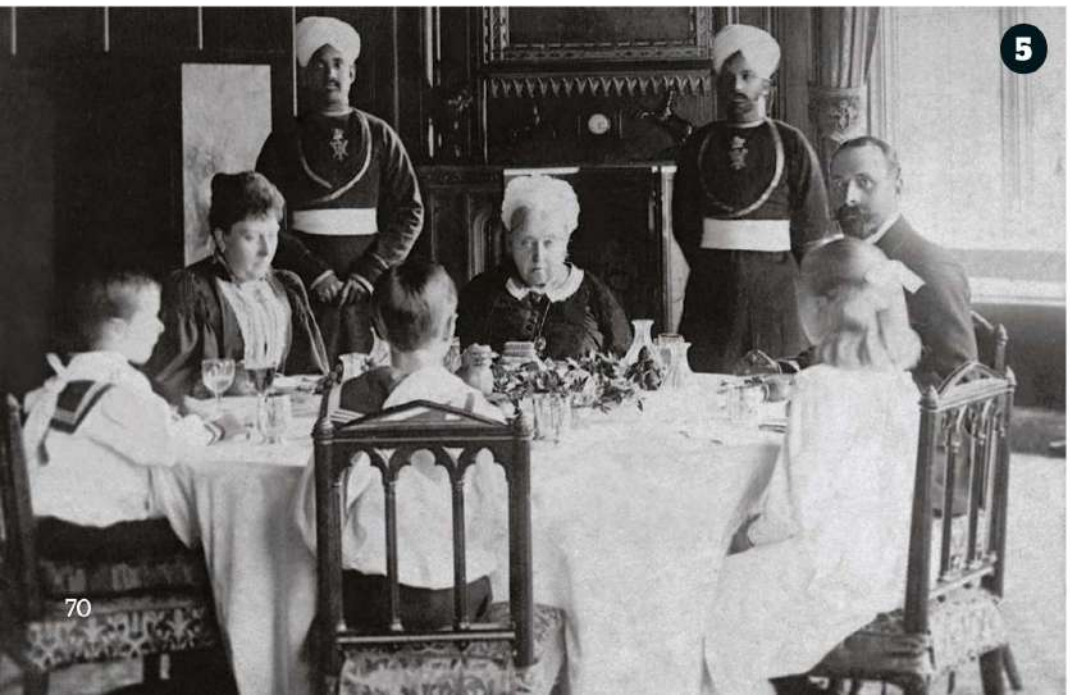
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Victoria's voracious appetites

From 'fancy breads' and smoked haddock to whisky and mulled wine, the queen greatly enjoyed food and drink – along with other, earthier pleasures of the flesh. Food historian **Rebecca Earle** explores the monarch's various cravings

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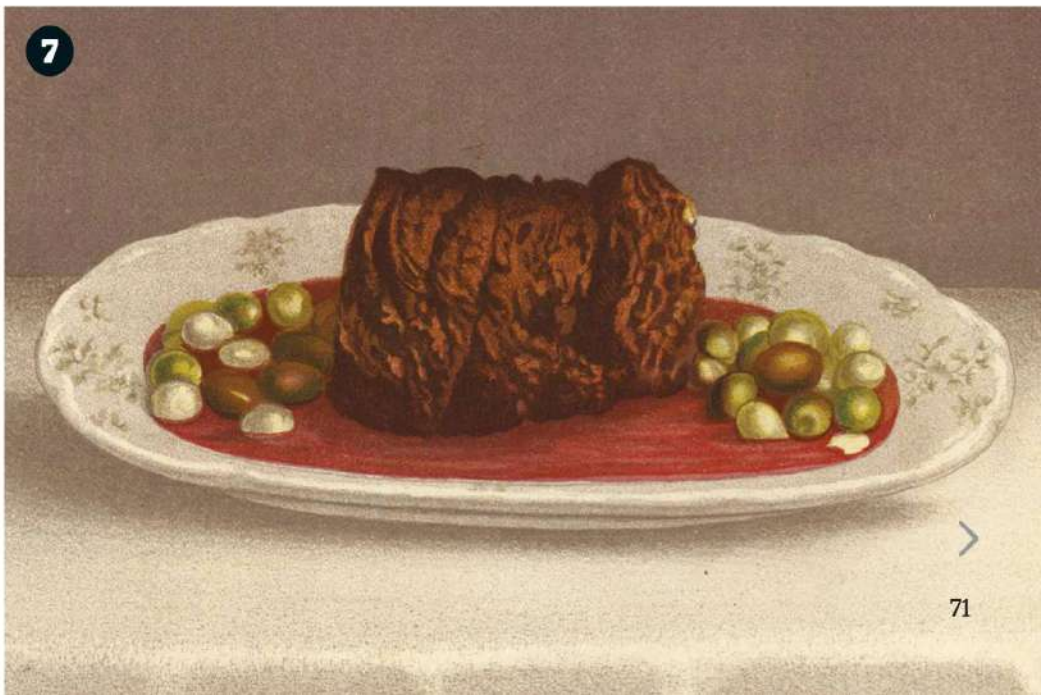




Tickling the royal tastebuds

1. Victoria and her family picnic in the mountains on 16 October 1861 at Cairn Lochan, west of her castle at Balmoral
2. A late 19th-century illustration of a variety of 'fancy breads', a key component of the queen's breakfast
3. The queen enjoys lunch near Nice with her daughter Princess Beatrice and granddaughter Princess Helena Victoria in 1895
4. A grand banquet at the Guildhall in London honouring the new queen, 1837
5. Victoria eats at Windsor in 1895 with her daughter Beatrice and son-in-law Henry of Battenberg, along with three of their four children
6. A selection of French desserts, painted in the 1860s. "A cranberry tart with cream is one of her favourite dishes," reported one observer
7. Roast beef fillet, illustrated in c1890 – a dish commonly served as a course in the royal dinner





Queen Victoria was certainly an enthusiastic eater. "Her little majesty", as one observer called the five-foot-tall monarch, had a hearty appetite, and displayed an avid enjoyment of food from her earliest years. According to historian Cecil Woodham Smith, this worried Victoria's relatives, who urged her to take more exercise and slow down. They fretted that the teenaged princess "eats a little too much, and almost always a little too fast".

As a child, Victoria was subjected to a rigorous regime of controlled eating – dinner might consist of just bread and milk. As a result, the young Victoria vowed to eat mutton every day when she grew up – and she certainly showed no intention of depriving herself once she reached adulthood.

Meals with her majesty

Once she was queen, Victoria's breakfast usually included porridge, fish, eggs on toast, 'fancy breads' and, in later years, finnan haddie, a form of smoked haddock. Of course, she did not necessarily eat everything on offer, but felt that it was important to have a choice.

Dinner might entail soup, fish, cold boiled chicken or roast beef, dessert and fruits, perhaps some of the pineapples grown specially for the royal household. She was also a fan of seasonal eating: "She never permits her own table or that of her

As a child, Victoria was subjected to a rigorous regime of controlled eating. The young Victoria **vowed to eat mutton every day when she grew up**



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Alfresco indulgence
The queen hosts a garden party for family members in the grounds of Osborne House on the Isle of Wight in 1887

household to be served with anything that is out of season," it was noted in *The Private Life of the Queen by a Member of the Royal Household*, an anonymous account published in 1897. "Her Majesty confesses to a great weakness for potatoes, which are cooked for her in every conceivable way," the same observer reported.

The queen particularly enjoyed sweet foods, with her wedding to Albert in 1840 offering a taste of things to come. The mammoth bride cake (a slice of which was sold at auction in 2016 for £1,500) weighed around 140kg (300lb) and had a circumference of some 2.7 metres. Meanwhile, satirical ballads at the time suggested that Albert was equally attracted to "England's fat queen and England's fatter purse".

Mulled wine, ice creams, cakes, and pastries of all sorts were an enduring pleasure for Victoria. According to the anonymous account from 1897, she had a great appetite for: "chocolate sponges, plain sponges, wafers of two or three different shapes, *langues de chat*, biscuits and drop cakes of all kinds, tablets, petit fours, princess and rice cakes, pralines, almond sweets, and a large variety of mixed sweets". "Her Majesty," it added, "is very fond of all kinds of pies, and a cranberry tart with cream is one of her favourite dishes."

In contrast, Victoria's children were fed on the plain roasts and broths that she viewed as appropriate for the nursery. She also selected the meals of her grandchildren, using a violet pencil to annotate the day's proposed menu.

Whisky lover

Alongside tea, which "has ever ranked high in the royal favour", the queen was also a lover of whisky, particularly in later years when her tastes were influenced by John Brown, her Scottish ghillie and close confidante. A small distillery near Balmoral produced a version specially for her, which she took with soda water. Her taste for the spirit, however, predated her relationship with Brown. For instance, on a visit to Scotland in 1842 the queen enjoyed a glass of Atholl brose (a mixture of whisky and honey) served in a glass said to have belonged to Niel Gow, the legendary Scottish fiddler.

Over the years, all this food and drink took its toll. "She is more like a barrel than anything else", observed one doctor in the 1840s; he predicted that if the queen carried on eating she would become enormously corpulent. She later abandoned her corset and was described as "very large, ruddy and fat".

By the 1880s, when she was in her sixties, Victoria's body mass index was over 32, and she would have been categorised as obese by today's measures. When advised to reduce her intake, she simply ate patented diet foods in addition to her existing programme.

Victoria's enthusiastic eating did not conform to the dietary advice typically dispensed to women at the time. Good table manners demanded sedate and measured eating and discouraged visible surrender to gustatory delight. The female digestive system was, moreover, said to require soft, dainty and bland foods. William Alcott's *A Young Woman's Book of Health* (1855) recommended avoiding "high-seasoned and exciting foods… as if they were rank poison".



A sensual portrait of Victoria in 1843 by Francis Xaver Winterhalter, commissioned as a birthday present for Albert. She was enthusiastic about sex, recalling of the nights after her wedding that "we did not sleep much"

Victoria's enthusiastic eating did not conform to dietary advice. Good table manners demanded sedate eating and **discouraged visible surrender to gustatory delight**

Bodily pleasures

One reason for this was that too hearty an enjoyment of food was believed to suggest a dangerously enthusiastic attitude towards other bodily pleasures. After all, as the doctor and social reformer Mary Ward-Allen warned, an unnatural appetite for spicy, exciting food was the inevitable result of the equally unnatural practice of masturbation. A bird-like appetite, accompanied by a disregard for food, demonstrated a woman's moral state, at the same time as enabling her to maintain a slim and dainty physique.

Queen Victoria herself, on the other hand, also enjoyed a tumble between the sheets. Things got off to a good start after her marriage to Prince Albert on 10 February 1840. "We did not sleep much", she noted in her diary a few days later, describing their first nights together. According to historian Paula Bartley, the royal couple possessed a fine collection of erotic art, and Victoria responded with dismay when advised by her doctor to forgo sexual activity in order to prevent further pregnancies. She regarded her nine pregnancies as a tiresome impediment to married life.

It has been suggested that the cultural roots of anorexia nervosa lie in the

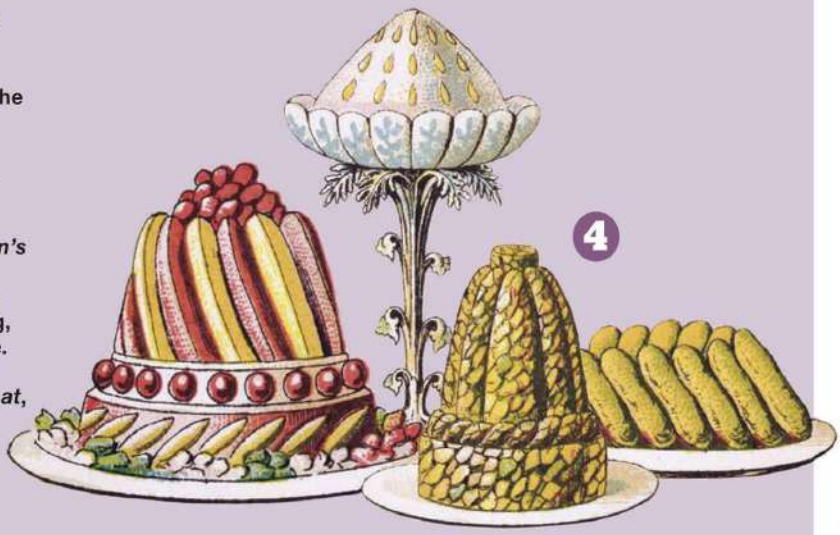
BRIDGEMAN-ROYAL COLLECTION TRUST © HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II, 2019"
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1 A wee dram
A bottle and glasses used by Victoria and Albert on their visit to Lochnagar Distillery in 1848. The queen grew increasingly fond of Scotch whisky in her later years, when her tastes were influenced by her Highland servant, John Brown

2 Birthday feast
The menu card for dinner on the queen's 80th birthday describes a large array of dishes including soups, fish, mutton, veal, quail, soufflés, asparagus and plovers' eggs

3 Decorative delicacy
A slice of bride cake from the royal wedding on 10 February 1840, presented in a special commemorative box. The cake weighed around 140kg and measured nearly 3 metres around

4 Sweet tooth
A plate from *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* (1879–80) illustrates iced pudding, trifle, biscuits and cake. The queen had a fondness for "*langues de chat*, biscuits and drop cakes of all kinds"



A woman of substance
Victoria pictured with two of her grandchildren in 1887. By this time, the queen had reached a size that would today be considered obese

Victorian era's denigration of eating as inherently unfeminine and dangerously sexual. Medical accounts from the 1890s began to describe cases such as the teenager who stopped eating "on account of her mother talking to her about being so fat", and another because of a "fear of being seen as a bit heavy". By not eating, young women distanced themselves from the taint of sexuality, and demonstrated their proper, genteel, moral status.

Diet as self-expression

Deprived of other avenues for self-expression, young women could at least decline to eat; refusing food provided these women with a voice. As the historian Joan Jacobs Brumberg has argued, "young women searching for an idiom in which to say things about themselves focused on food and the body".

Victoria's uniquely powerful position allowed her to ignore the social constraints imposed on other young women, and **make her own choices about her diet and her body**

If appetite was a voice, then Victoria was speaking loudly when she relished roast beef and whisky. Her uniquely powerful position allowed her to ignore some of the social constraints imposed on other young women, and to make her own choices about her diet and her body.

Today, over 60 per cent of the UK population is classified as overweight, and sexual pleasure is considered something to celebrate. These may not be the 'Victorian values' that the Conservative Party urged us to adopt in 2006, but Victoria herself might endorse both aspects of contemporary British society. Certainly, sex and eating were activities dear to "her little majesty". H

Rebecca Earle is a food historian and professor of history at the University of Warwick. Her latest book is *Potato* (Bloomsbury, 2019)

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FRIENDS, FAMILY AND RIVALS



Queen Victoria invests Emperor Napoleon III of France with the Order of the Garter in 1855

During her long reign, Victoria met some of Europe's most powerful figures – many of them relatives by blood or marriage. **John Van der Kiste** explores her relationships with emperors, tsars and kaisers, and the dynastic alliances and clashes that resulted

ALAMY



Grandmother of Europe
Victoria is surrounded by European royalty – many of them her children, grandchildren or in-laws – in 1894. Among the current and future leaders pictured are Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany (the queen's grandson, front left), Tsar Nicholas II of Russia (in bowler hat, centre left), and behind him Victoria's son Bertie (the future Edward VII of Britain)

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In 1876, having reigned over Britain for nearly 40 years, Queen Victoria was finally proclaimed an empress – of India. In that time she had got to know a number of other emperors on mainland Europe – rulers of Russia, Germany, Austria and France.

Although Victoria travelled in Europe at intervals throughout her life, she paid a state visit to only one of these four empires – the Second French empire, in 1855. She went to Berlin twice, first in 1858 (while it was still the pre-imperial capital of the kingdom of Prussia, the German empire not coming into existence until 1871) and again in 1888, but both occasions were purely family visits to see her eldest daughter and son-in-law.

Victoria never set foot in the Austro-Hungarian empire or Russia, meanwhile, and her meetings with the leaders of those empires took place elsewhere in Europe or on English soil. In fact, Victoria's most frequent European destination, mainly in her later years, was the French Riviera, where she sometimes went on holiday in the spring.

As a constitutional monarch, Victoria's involvement with the political affairs of Europe's major empires was minimal. Her personal and political relations were on a closer footing with some than with others. As Walter Bagehot wrote in *The English Constitution*, published in 1867, the sovereign had "three rights: the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, the right to warn". Where the interests of England clashed with those of the European empires, she would on occasion do all three – and sometimes regretted that she could go no further.

Although Victoria travelled in Europe at intervals throughout her life, **she paid a state visit to only one of its four major empires**

Russia

Encounters with an empire aiming for expansion

During the first 10 years of her reign, Victoria's only imperial connections were with tsars of Russia, one future and one present. In May 1839, just a few days after her 20th birthday, the tsarevich, Grand Duke Alexander Nikolaevich (1818–81), came to pay Victoria a courtesy visit. As a monarch-in-waiting – he later became Tsar Alexander II – he was touring a number of European countries in order to gain experience of other courts and to further Russia's intentions of establishing friendly relations with the great powers.

Alexander and Victoria got on very well and went riding in Windsor Great Park together every morning. At a state ball at Buckingham Palace given in Alexander's honour, the queen danced several times with him, and was very excited when he whisked her round the floor. In her journal she noted afterwards how she felt she really loved "this amiable and dear young man, who has such a sweet smile".

Before Alexander left, he told Victoria how grateful he was for all her kindness, that he hoped to return, and trusted the visit would strengthen the ties of friendship between England and Russia. When he departed, Victoria said that she felt more as if she was taking leave of a relation than a stranger: "he is so frank, so really young and merry, has such a nice open countenance with a sweet smile, and such a manly fine figure and appearance."

There could, however, be no question of a romantic attachment between the queen of England and the next tsar of Russia, even though both were still single. Within two years the queen had married Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and Alexander had married Princess Marie of Hesse.

Five years later it was the turn of Alexander's father, Tsar Nicholas I (1796–1855), to come to England. His intentions on this visit were mainly political rather than personal. He was apprehensive about the increasingly close relationship between England and France, which could affect any designs he and his ministers might have for enlarging Russian territory at the expense of the Ottoman empire. The encounter between queen and tsar proved an amicable one, though, and she noted afterwards that there was "much about him which I cannot help liking".

Despite this personal accord between the rulers, the tsar's visit did nothing to thwart the growing Anglo-French unity that was later consolidated in an alliance against Russia, leading to the latter's ignominious defeat in the Crimean War in 1856. Nicholas himself died of pneumonia in February 1855, though it was rumoured that he had killed himself because he was so ashamed at being beaten on the battlefield.

During the reign of his successor, Alexander II (Victoria's acquaintance of old), a closer family connection was forged with the English monarchy when Alexander's only surviving daughter, Grand Duchess Marie, married Victoria's second son Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh. However, the union of the hard-drinking duke and his haughty Russian wife – who cordially disliked his family – would not prove a happy one.

Later in life, Victoria never cared for Alexander III (1845–94), "a sovereign whom she does not look upon as a gentleman". But when Alexander fell ill and died in 1894, at the young age of 49, she feared for the future of Russia.

His son and successor, Nicholas II (1868–1918), was a likeable if weak-willed young man, and Victoria worried that he might not be equal to the burden of governing his vast empire, for which he had been ill-prepared. Nicholas had just become engaged to Princess Alix of Hesse, one of Victoria's favourite granddaughters. "No two people were ever more devoted as she and he are," she had written on their betrothal, "and this is one consolation I have, for otherwise the dangers and responsibilities fill me with anxiety."



Tsar Nicholas II was a likeable if weak-willed young man. **Victoria worried that he might not be equal to governing his vast empire**

ABOVE ***Tsar Nicholas Works in his Cabinet*, a French sketch of 1850 satirising Russia's imperial ambitions**
BELOW **Tsar Nicholas I, who visited Victoria in 1844. She noted "much about him which I cannot help liking"**

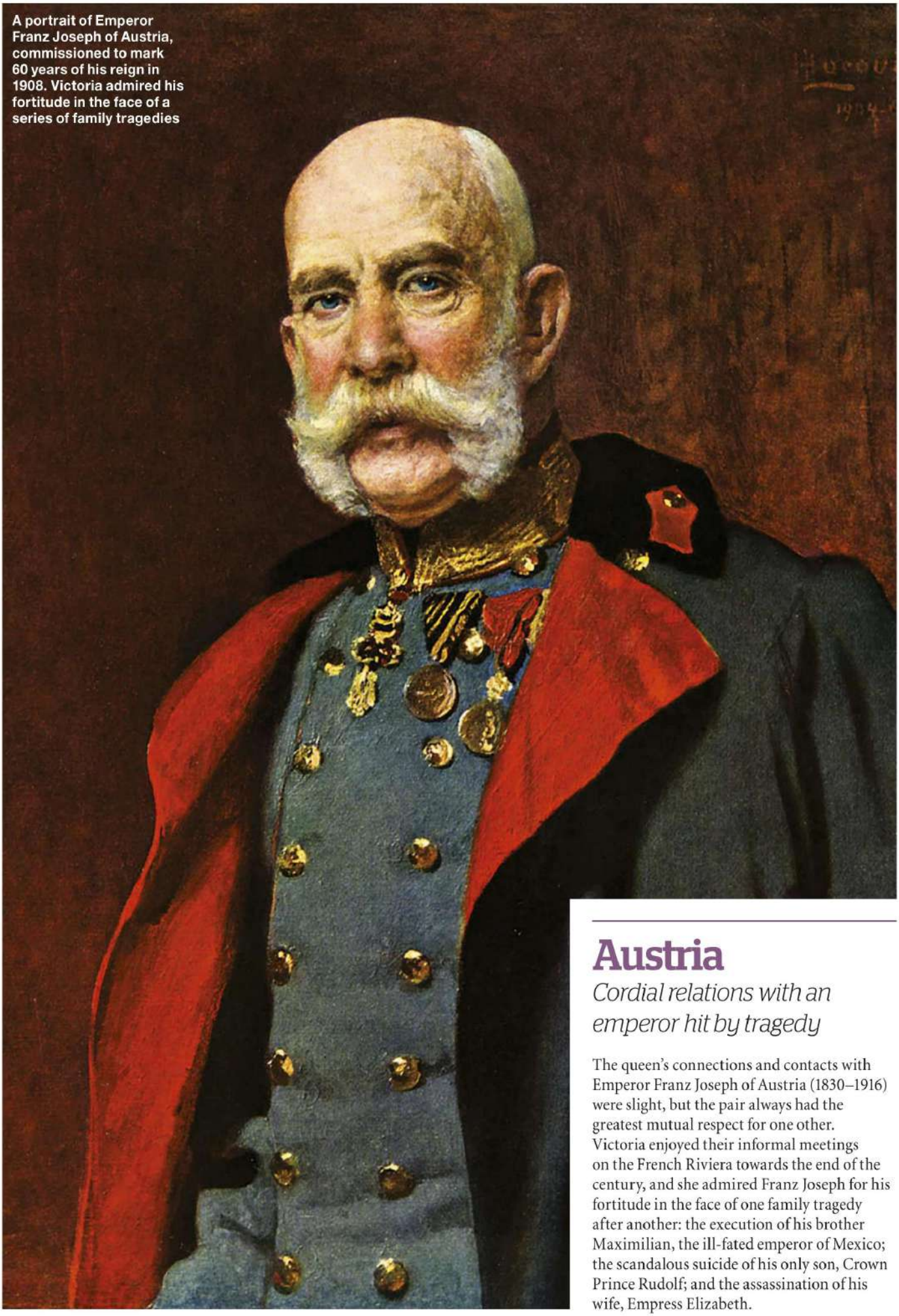


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Where families collide
Tsar Alexander II (seated, centre) is flanked by his daughter Grand Duchess Marie. At far right is her husband Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh – Queen Victoria's second son

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A portrait of Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria, commissioned to mark 60 years of his reign in 1908. Victoria admired his fortitude in the face of a series of family tragedies

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Austria

Cordial relations with an emperor hit by tragedy

The queen's connections and contacts with Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria (1830–1916) were slight, but the pair always had the greatest mutual respect for one other. Victoria enjoyed their informal meetings on the French Riviera towards the end of the century, and she admired Franz Joseph for his fortitude in the face of one family tragedy after another: the execution of his brother Maximilian, the ill-fated emperor of Mexico; the scandalous suicide of his only son, Crown Prince Rudolf; and the assassination of his wife, Empress Elizabeth.

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert are joined on a dais by Emperor Napoleon III and his wife Eugénie at a ceremony in the Crystal Palace, London, in 1855

France

An enemy's son becomes a family friend

By the start of the Crimean War in 1853, the queen had established the warmest of relationships with France's emperor Napoleon III (1808–73) and empress Eugénie (1826–1920). At first, Victoria had reservations about the rise to power of the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, who had been Britain's greatest enemy, but the emperor's charm soon won her over.

A very successful state visit by Napoleon and Eugénie to England in April 1855 was followed by a return visit by Victoria, Albert and their two eldest children to Paris that August. By the time they parted company, the queen had been deeply impressed by Napoleon, whom she found "a very extraordinary man, with great qualities" who was "evidently possessed of indomitable courage, unflinching firmness of purpose, self-reliance, perseverance, and great secrecy". As for Eugénie, the queen considered her "such a dear, sweet, engaging, and distinguishing being".

In 1870, the glittering French empire was brought down, after defeat at the hands of Germany in the Franco-Prussian war. Napoleon abdicated and, together with Eugénie and their son, settled in exile in England. By that time the former emperor was already ill, and he died in 1873. His son Louis-Napoleon joined the British army and died fighting in the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879. The widowed empress remained a close friend of Victoria and her family. She died in 1920, aged 94.

Victoria had reservations about the rise to power of the nephew of Napoleon **but the emperor's charm soon won her over**



Napoleon III, Eugénie and their son Louis-Napoleon, pictured in exile in England in 1872. Louis-Napoleon joined the British army and died in the Anglo-Zulu war in 1879

Germany

A grandson's arrogance that sparked a family feud

In 1871, amid the ashes of imperial France, a new empire was proclaimed: Germany. Europe's newest emperor was Wilhelm I, king of Prussia (1797–1888). His only son and heir, Prince Frederick William – who was politically a liberal – was the husband of the British queen's eldest daughter, also called Victoria. Their marriage in 1858 had been seen by Prince Albert (who died three years later) as the prelude to a united Germany under Prussian leadership, with 'Fritz' and 'Vicky' as king and queen.

Such hopes were dashed, however, because the arch-conservative Wilhelm I, aged 73 at the time of Germany's unification, lived to be 90 years old. By the time he died in March 1888, his successor Frederick was stricken with cancer of the larynx, surviving for only three more months. Queen Victoria had longed for the day when her son-in-law and daughter would reign over a more progressively governed German empire – one that could be a staunch ally of Britain – but it had come too late. "None of my own sons could be a greater loss," she noted in her journal after receiving the news of Frederick's death. "My poor child's whole future gone, ruined, which they had prepared themselves for nearly 30 years!"

The new emperor was Wilhelm (1859–1941), eldest son of Frederick and Victoria, who had been born with a withered left arm and hand but who at 29 years old was a headstrong prince. He very much reflected the militarism of his grandfather, and regarded his parents' liberalism as anathema. Wilhelm treated his widowed mother badly, and heaped every insult possible on the memory of his father. Queen Victoria had always doted on Wilhelm, her eldest grandchild, but she was exasperated by his arrogance and high-handed behaviour towards his English relations, and in particular towards her eldest son and heir, his 'Uncle Bertie' (later King Edward VII).

During a protracted family quarrel a few months after Wilhelm's accession, her patience with him finally snapped. She wrote angrily to her prime minister Lord Robert Cecil, the Marquess of Salisbury, that she had always treated her grandson with great consideration, and it was "perfect madness" for him to insist "that he is to be treated in private as well as in public as 'his imperial majesty'".

Queen Victoria had longed for the day when her son-in-law and daughter would reign over a **more progressively governed German empire, but it had come too late**



Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, the queen's eldest grandson. Victoria became exasperated by his arrogance and high-handed behaviour towards his English relations, particularly his 'Uncle Bertie', later King Edward VII



The inauguration of the Reichstag (German parliament) by Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1888, the year of his accession to the German and Prussian thrones

Victoria was anxious that a private family issue should have as little impact as possible on matters of state. She feared that, if matters deteriorated, it would have a detrimental effect on political relations between the British and German governments. "This should not be affected (if possible) by these miserable personal quarrels," she continued, "but the queen much fears that, with such a hot-headed, conceited, and wrongheaded young man, devoid of all feeling, this may at any moment become impossible." At length, differences were resolved, but for the remaining 12 years of her life Victoria continued to be irritated at intervals by Wilhelm's vanity and unstable behaviour.

Although her political power in Europe was negligible in comparison with that of the other imperial leaders, Queen Victoria

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was generally admired by most of them. Despite some of his utterances to the contrary, her eldest grandson Wilhelm II never ceased to revere her memory. When she became ill in 1901, he cancelled several pressing engagements in Berlin in order to be with her when she died.

When war broke out in Europe in 1914, Wilhelm was filled with bitterness against his cousins and now adversaries, King George V of Britain and Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, to whom he had at times been very close. "To think that Georgie and Nicky should have played me false," he allegedly said. "If my grandmother had been alive, she would never have allowed it." H

John Van der Kiste is the author of *Queen Victoria and the European Empires* (Fonthill Media, 2016)

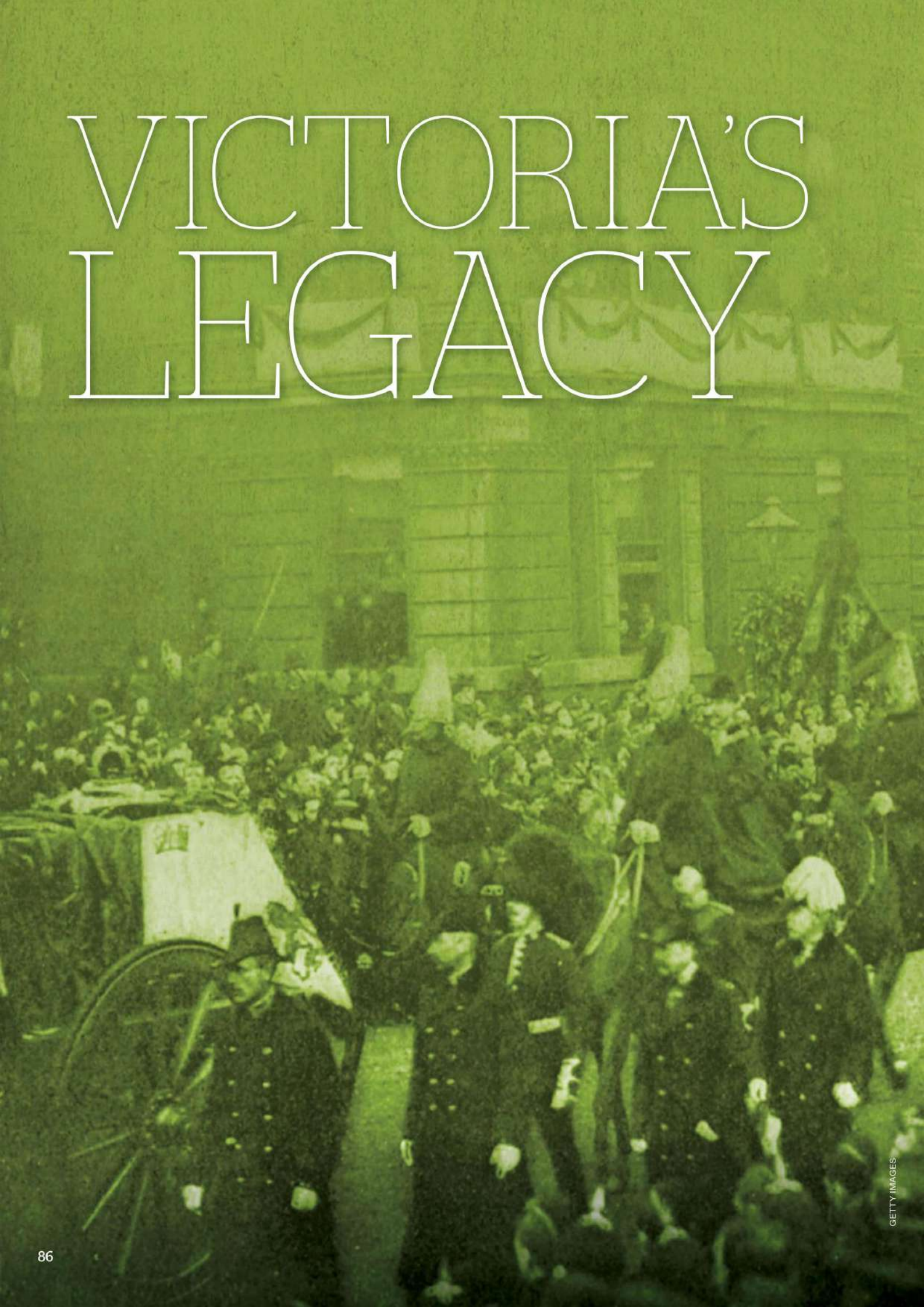




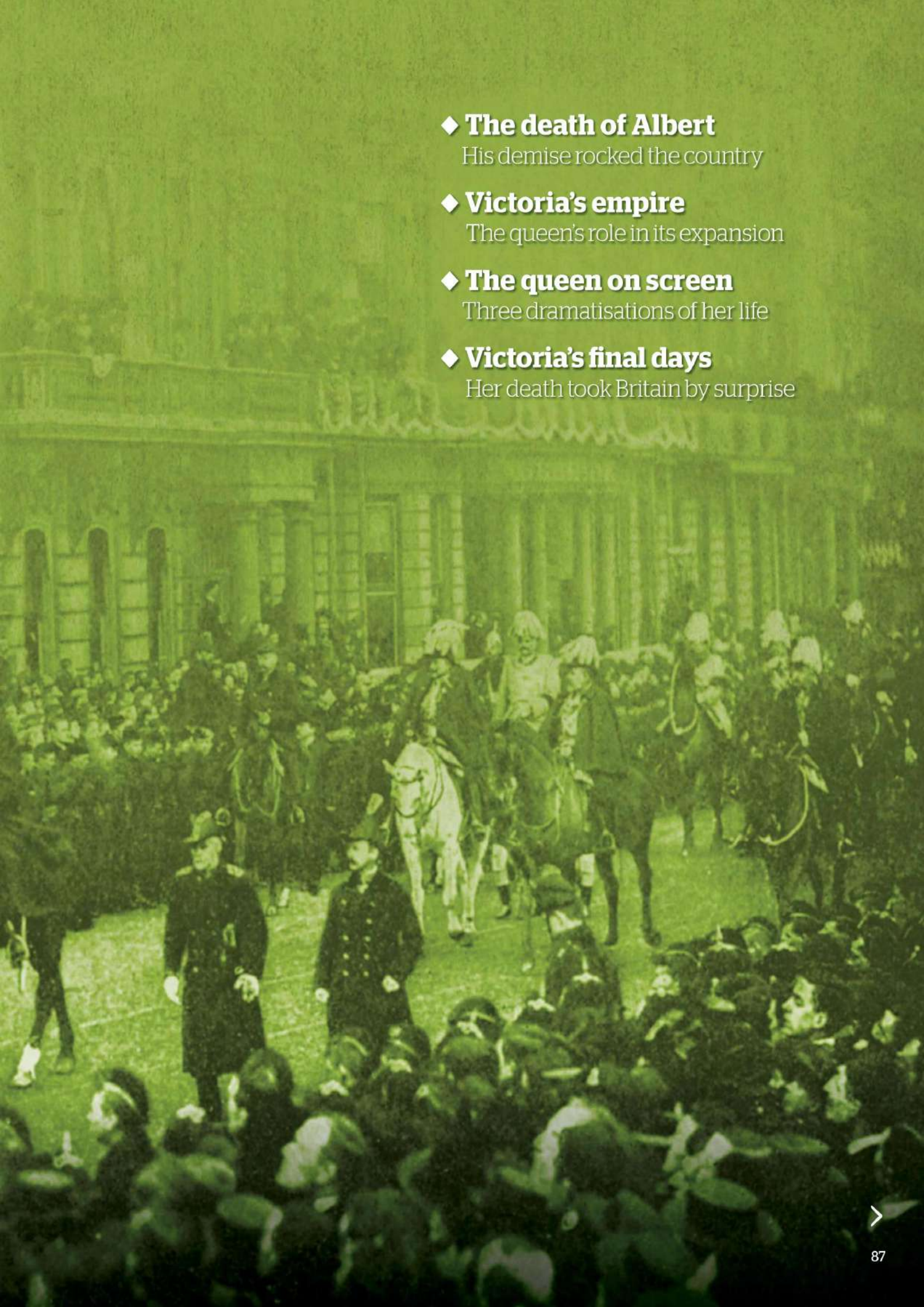
LEFT **Crown Prince Frederick, heir to the German throne, with his wife Victoria, the British queen's eldest daughter**
ABOVE **Queen Victoria and her daughter mourn Kaiser Frederick III. He died in 1888 after reigning for just three months**

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VICTORIA'S LEGACY



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- **The death of Albert**
  His demise rocked the country
- **Victoria's empire**
  The queen's role in its expansion
- **The queen on screen**
  Three dramatisations of her life
- **Victoria's final days**
  Her death took Britain by surprise



Unrelenting grief
Queen Victoria at Balmoral with her daughters Princess Alice and Princess Louise and a portrait of her late husband, Albert, in 1863



THE DEATH THAT *ROCKED* THE MONARCHY

The demise of Queen Victoria's beloved husband, Prince Albert, dealt Britain's royal family a hammer blow from which it struggled to recover. **Helen Rappaport** explains why Albert's death was regarded as a national calamity

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The royal family in c1860/61. By championing the virtues of family life, Victoria and Albert had rescued the monarchy's ailing reputation

When Prince Albert breathed his last at 10.50pm on the night of Saturday 14 December 1861 at Windsor, a telegraph message was sent within the hour to the lord mayor, ordering that the great bell of St Paul's Cathedral should toll out the news across London. Everyone knew that this sound signified one of two things: the death of a monarch or a moment of extreme national crisis such as war.

People living in the vicinity of the cathedral who had already gone to their beds that night were woken by the doleful sound; many of them dressed and began gathering outside St Paul's to share the news with shock and incredulity. Only the previous morning, the latest bulletin from Windsor had informed them that the prince, who had been unwell for the previous two weeks, had rallied during the night of the 13th. The whole nation had settled down for the evening having been reassured, hopeful that the worst was now over.

Most of the Sunday morning papers for 15 December had already gone to press and did not carry the news, though in London one or two special broadsheets were rushed out and sold at a premium. For most ordinary British people, the news of Prince Albert's death was transmitted through the mournful sound of bells, as the message was relayed from village to village and city to city from the towers of the country's many churches.

Many still did not realise the significance until, when it came to the prayers for the royal family during morning service, the prince's name was omitted. But it was still hard to believe. The official bulletins from Windsor had suggested only a 'low fever' – which in Victorian parlance could be anything from a chill to something more sinister, like typhoid fever. The royal doctors had been extremely circumspect in discussing his illness – they didn't specify what exactly was wrong, not just to the public but also to Albert's highly strung wife – and very few people had any inkling of how ill he was. How could this have happened? people asked themselves; how could a vigorous man of only 42 have died without warning?

The public response to Albert's death bears parallels with the **outpouring of grief that followed the death of Princess Diana**

The impact of Prince Albert's death, coming as unexpectedly as it did, was dramatic and unprecedented. The last time that the nation had mourned the loss of a member of the royal family in similar circumstances had been back in 1817, when Princess Charlotte, daughter of the Prince Regent, George – and heir to the throne, failing the birth of any legitimate male heirs – had died shortly after giving birth to a stillborn baby boy. Public grief at that tragedy had been enormous, and the outpouring that followed the death of Albert was no less pronounced.

His might not have been a young and beautiful death like Charlotte's, but its impact, both publicly and politically, was enormous. It was seen as nothing less than a national calamity – because Britain had in effect lost its king. Worse, Albert's death had come at a time of political crisis, with the British government embroiled in a tense diplomatic standoff with the Northern states during the American Civil War.

That situation had prompted Prince Albert's final act of public business on 1 December. Already very sick, he had

MARY EVANS



The queen and prince consort in 1854. "There was not a single aspect of her life on which she had not deferred to his advice and greater wisdom," says Helen Rappaport

amended a belligerent despatch from Lord Palmerston following the North's seizure of two Confederate agents from a British West Indies mail packet, the *Trent*. Those agents had been on their way to Europe to raise support for the South. At worst, the boarding of the *Trent* was a breach of British neutrality. Albert had warned that to force the issue without finding a diplomatic way out would mean war – at a time when Britain had barely recovered from the bloody campaign in the Crimea.

Loss to the nation

Albert's intercession had helped defuse a tense political situation – a fact that prompted the prime minister, Lord Palmerston, to observe that such had become the prince's value to the British government that it would have been "better for England to have had a ten years' war with America than to have lost Prince Albert". Yet Britain had indeed lost Albert, and the prince's death plunged the queen into grief so profound that it would dramatically alter the shape of the British monarchy – not just for the rest of Victoria's reign but in the way in which it has come down to us today.

The public response in the days immediately afterwards bears many parallels with the outpouring of grief that followed the death of Princess Diana more than a century later. And, in a sombre precursor of princes William and Harry following Diana's coffin in 1997, the loss was made equally poignant by the presence at Albert's all-male funeral at Windsor of two of his young sons, Bertie (20) and Arthur (11).

The whole country was swathed in black: shops were shuttered, blinds drawn, flags at half mast, theatre performances and concerts cancelled. The middle classes put themselves and their children into black, and trade at the funeral warehouses boomed as never before. Even the poorest rural cottager donned some form of black, if only an armband. That Christmas, 1861, was one of the gloomiest ever seen in England.

It would take time, however, for the far more significant political impact of the prince's death to become apparent. During their 21 years of marriage, Victoria and Albert had done much to rescue the ailing monarchy from the lingering dissolute reputation of the Hanoverians, reinvigorating it as a democratic and moral example for the new age. The royal family had become popular again and accessible to ordinary people, thanks to the example it set, of the simple domestic virtues of monogamy, bourgeois decency and family life. It was

What killed Albert?

The diagnosis of typhoid fever as the cause of Prince Albert's death went largely unchallenged for a century and a half, in part because Albert himself had been at pains to disguise his failing health, even from his wife. He had, in fact, been declining physically for many years – worn out by overwork and stress that aggravated the long-standing intestinal problem that finally precipitated his death.

Typhoid fever, which mimics some of the symptoms of Albert's condition, seemed the safest assessment at the time. But a study of Victoria and Albert's diaries and letters suggests he was probably suffering from Crohn's disease, symptoms of which are progressive and fluctuate in intensity over many years. Untreated, it would have caused episodic partial obstruction in the bowel, accompanied by the fever, diarrhoea and abdominal pain of which Albert frequently complained. Lacking the diagnostic skills and medical technologies available today, the royal doctors could not have understood his chronic condition, nor have access to any suitable treatment.

A period of extreme stress from the end of November 1861 caused the condition to flare up, leading to septicaemia, though in the end it was pneumonia that carried Albert off. Either way, the doctors could not have saved him from a condition that even today can be controlled but not cured.



An engraving after a painting of Albert in 1847. By the time of his death, the prince consort was regarded as king in all but name

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The Albert Memorial in Kensington Gardens, London, designed by George Gilbert Scott and completed in 1872

ALAMY

an image that Albert had assiduously promoted, right from the first popular magazine illustrations of the royal family enjoying Christmas at Windsor, German-style, with decorated fir trees.

Once the initial shock of Albert's death had receded, the far more pressing question in everyone's minds, particularly those in government, was its impact on Victoria. How would the queen bear it? How would she cope with all of her onerous duties without him? No one had any doubt about the extent of Victoria's dependence on her late husband – not just emotionally, but also in dealing daily with the mountain of official business.

Albert had been all in all to Victoria: husband, friend, confidant, wise counsel, unofficial secretary and government minister. There was not a single aspect of her life on which she had not deferred to his advice and greater wisdom. Indeed, so reliant was she on his opinion in everything that she would even consult him on what bonnet to wear.

Over time – and with his wife often sidelined by pregnancy – Albert had become all-powerful, performing the functions of king but without the title, driving himself relentlessly through a schedule of official duties that even he admitted felt like being on a treadmill. But it was only after he died that the nation acknowledged the debt it owed him. The laments were many and profound in the acres of obituaries that filled the British press. Many of them were tinged with a profound sense of guilt that Albert had never been sufficiently valued during his lifetime for his many and notable contributions to British culture as an outstanding patron of the arts, education, science and business.

Abiding obsession

Victoria's descent into a crippling state of unrelenting grief rapidly created problems. It soon became clear that her retreat from public view and her intense sorrow would endure well beyond the usual two years of conventional mourning. Without Albert she felt rudderless. To lose him, as she herself said, was "like tearing the flesh from my bones". The isolation of her position as queen was profound. "There is no one to call me Victoria now," she wept, in response to the grinding loss of intimacy, affection and physical love that she now felt.

Albert had been Victoria's one great, abiding obsession in life. With no strong man to support her, with a feckless heir, Bertie, who had caused her nothing but anxiety, and with a family of nine children to parent alone, she retreated into a state of pathological grief nobody could penetrate and few understood. Worse, she imposed the most rigorous observance of mourning on her family and her entourage, and became increasingly intractable in response to every attempt to coax her out of her self-imposed purdah. Her observance of the rituals of mourning became so fetishistic and so protracted that there was a danger of her sinking so totally into her grief that she – and the monarchy – would never recover.

The only thing that interested Victoria now was her single-handed mission to memorialise her husband in perpetuity. She did so with aplomb, turning her grieving into performance art as she instigated a range of artistic and cultural monuments commemorating Albert that would transform the British landscape and set their visual stamp not just on the second half of her reign but on our perception today of the Victorian era.



BRIDGEMAN

Victoria pictured on horseback at Balmoral in 1863. Her retreat from public life following Albert's death prompted a surge of anti-monarchical sentiment across Britain

A crude 'assassination' attempt against Victoria rallied public sympathy and support for her to unprecedented levels

As far as Victoria was concerned, her happy life had ended the day Albert died. But by the mid-1860s her ministers – and even her own children – were becoming frantic at her continued retreat from public view and her dogged refusal to take part in any form of public ceremonial. Anti-monarchical feeling was growing, with regular complaints that Victoria did nothing to justify her income from the Civil List. All of Albert's hard work over 20 years in educating his wife in her performance of duty was now being dangerously undermined.

By the end of the 1860s, discontent escalated into outright republican challenges and calls for Victoria's abdication. Then, just when all seemed lost, the monarchy was rescued from disaster. The near-fatal illness of the Prince of Wales in December 1871 – on the tenth anniversary of his father's death – and his miraculous recovery prompted the first piece of state ceremonial in over a decade, when Queen Victoria attended a thanksgiving service at St Paul's Cathedral. Three days later, a crude 'assassination' attempt against her rallied public sympathy for Victoria to unprecedented levels.

By this time the queen had begun to recover, thanks to the support of her trusted Highland servant John Brown and, in 1874, the return of her adored Benjamin Disraeli as prime minister. It was by now clear that the queen would never leave off her black. However, as she was coaxed back into public view, she did so as a respected figure of enduring dignity and fortitude, ageing into her familiar image of matriarchal widow, empress and 'Grandmama of Europe'. It was only at this point that people started calling themselves 'Victorians', as the widowed queen set her stamp irrevocably on the great and final days of empire, at the head of a ceremonial and constitutional monarchy that survives to this day. H

Helen Rappaport is a writer and historian, author of *The Victoria Letters: The Heart and Mind of a Young Queen* (HarperCollins, 2016)

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BOOK

▶ **Magnificent Obsession: Victoria, Albert and the Death that Changed the Monarchy** by Helen Rappaport (Hutchinson, 2011)

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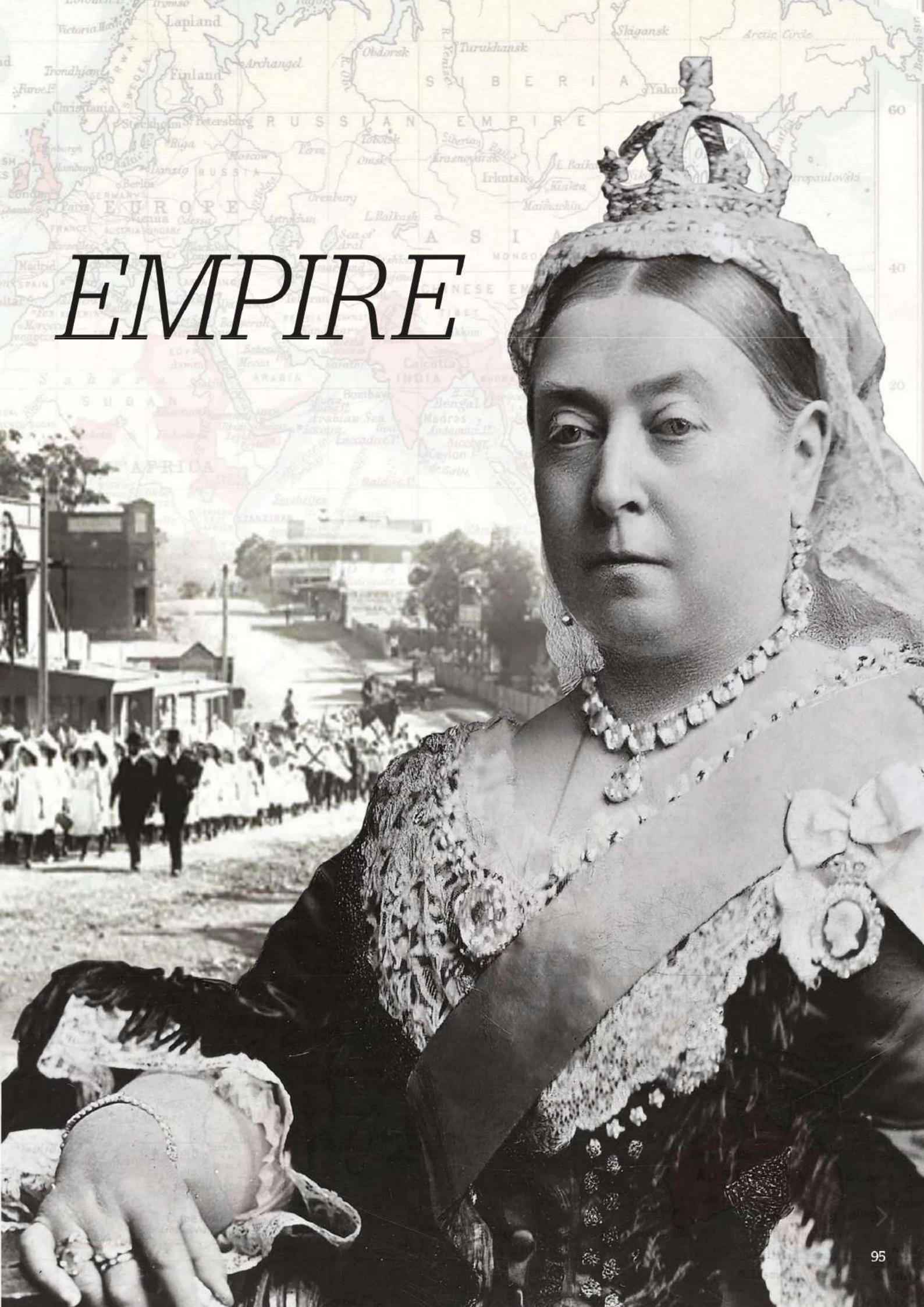


During Victoria's reign, British dominions spread across the globe to create the largest empire the world has ever seen. **Miles Taylor** explores the queen's role in this expansion – and the empire's impact on her

Queen Victoria – pictured in 1887, her golden jubilee year – was "addicted to the empire in India", says Miles Taylor, and accumulated Indian artefacts including the Koh-i-Noor diamond, worn here in a brooch. After her death the queen's birthday, 24 May, was celebrated as Empire Day in many countries – above, in Australia in 1907

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EMPIRE


Lapland
Finland
Archangel
Obdorsk
Turukhansk
Skagansk
Arctic Circle
RUSSIAN EMPIRE
Yakutsk
Irkutsk
Petersburg
Moscow
Riga
Berlin
Paris
EUROPE
Vienna
Odessa
Orenburg
Tobolsk
Omsk
Krasnoyarsk
L. Baikal
Kamchatka
Petropaulovski
ASIA
Calcutta
INDIA
Bombay
Madras
Ceylon
ARABIA
AFRICA
60
40
20

When Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837, the British empire was in a mess. The American colonies had been lost during the reign of her grandfather, George III, and French Canada was also on the verge of quitting, as Quebecois rebel Louis-Joseph Papineau led a boycott of British goods.

Victoria's long reign changed all that. True, as she died in 1901 Britain was fighting another colonial war on another continent, this time against the Boers in South Africa. However, her reign had coincided with much of the hundred-year period celebrated as the Pax Britannica. British global dominance – in trade, military might and the soft power of religion and culture – expanded her imperial realm, making the British empire the largest in history.

It was a remarkable transformation, from a kingdom of four nations into an empire where literally the sun never set – it was always daytime somewhere in the British world. Back in 1837, cartographers coloured British possessions red to make them stand out more, so scattered and small did they seem on a world map. By 1901, though, mapmakers such as Stanford's and Bartholomew's could not keep up, as more and more territory came under British rule each passing year.

Here lay another unique feature of the empire during Victorian times: never before or since has there been such a huge, dispersed, seaborne empire. Empires are usually contiguous and landlocked – for example, the Mongol empire of the 13th century, or the Soviet empire of 1917–91. By contrast, Britannia ruled the waves.

A shrinking globe

More than anyone or anything else, Queen Victoria drew together this far-flung empire, especially once modern technology shrank the globe. On the day she celebrated her diamond jubilee, 22 June 1897, she sent a simultaneous telegram to the 150 or so countries and protectorates that comprised the empire, which had a total population of around 384 million people.

Even in death, she transcended the oceans. In 1901, a memorial service in Wellington, capital of New Zealand, was held at night so that it coincided exactly with her funeral back in Britain. By contrast, in 1837 the small population of New Zealand did not hear of the accession of Queen Victoria until the following year – nine months or so later – so far away did those islands lie.

Never before or since has there been such a huge, dispersed, seaborne empire... More than anyone or anything else, Queen Victoria drew together this far-flung empire, **especially once modern technology shrank the globe**

But what did this vast empire mean to the queen, and what did she mean to her colonial and imperial subjects? Until recently, historians have focused mainly on the moment in 1876 when Benjamin Disraeli made Victoria the Empress of India. From then on, the pomp and ceremony associated with empire acquired a royal flourish that lives on to this day. The royal family are an integral part of the modern Commonwealth. Rarely does a year go by without a royal visit somewhere in the former empire; indeed, Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall visited the West Indies in March 2019.

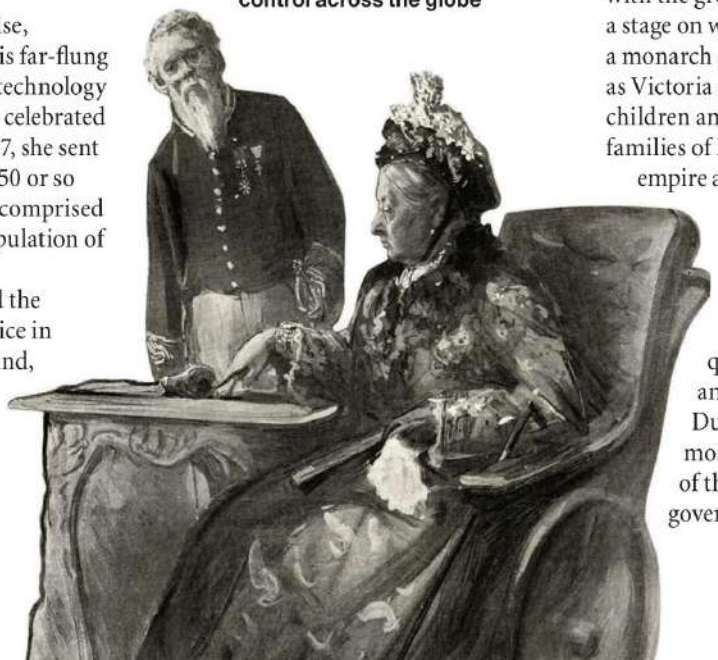
However, there is now a fresh burst of interest in Victoria's own role in empire that goes far beyond Disraeli's designs. We now know so much more about the ways in which she was personally involved in the growth and government of the empire, and also about how people around the world, particularly indigenous populations, responded to a female monarch. In other words, the empire is becoming as important a part of the story of Queen Victoria as other aspects of her life and times.

Empire was in Queen Victoria's DNA. Her father, Prince Edward, the Duke of Kent, served in the army command in Canada and the Caribbean, fighting the French at the battle of Martinique in 1794, and was later governor of Gibraltar. On her mother's side, Victoria's heritage extended back to the Holy Roman Empire, the old grouping of small kingdoms, duchies and free cities in the territories east of France that lasted until 1806.

This was not an accident of genealogy. Throughout her reign, the imperial dynasties of continental Europe combined with the growing colonial empire to create a stage on which much of her statecraft as a monarch and as a mother played out. Just as Victoria and Albert married off their children and grandchildren into the royal families of Europe, they also looked to the empire as an employment opportunity.

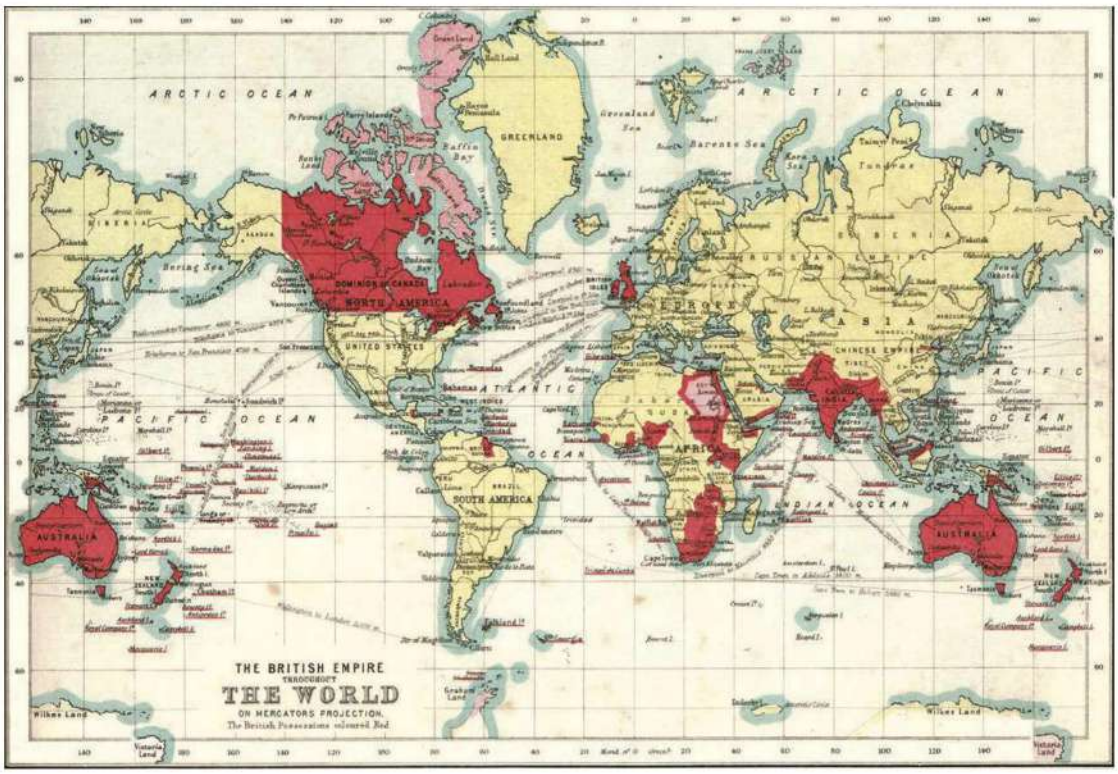
The queen considered making her son Prince Arthur 'Duke of Canada', and Prince Alfred 'Duke of Australia'. Neither title was created, but the queen's fourth daughter Louise and her husband, the future 9th Duke of Argyll, became one of the most successful viceregal couples of the time after he was appointed governor-general of Canada in 1878.

Victoria sends telegrams to lands across the British empire on her diamond jubilee in 1897. During her reign, technology made for easier communication and control across the globe



ALAMY





ABOVE **A map of the British empire produced by Bartholomew's in 1859. Just over two decades after Victoria's accession, her dominions had expanded to include parts of coastal west Africa, and all of India, Australia and New Zealand**
LEFT **By the time of Victoria's death in 1901 (this Bartholomew's map is from 1902), the British empire included swathes of southern and east Africa, Malaya, northern Borneo, even Antarctic territories**

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Such royal colonial appointments were not simply ceremonial offices; this was a working colonial monarchy. The royal princes were groomed for their imperial responsibilities through tours of the empire during which they combined high society with hunting, and even made time for diplomatic missions at the behest of the British government. Edward, Prince of Wales and heir to the throne, went to India in 1875–76. Alfred, the naval officer, took a world cruise in 1867–71 (during which he survived an assassination attempt in the Australian city of Sydney). Arthur, the soldier, served in Cyprus, Egypt and India in the 1870s and 1880s. And Edward's son Albert Victor travelled around India in 1889–90, shortly before his premature death; some say he was sent east to escape a sexual scandal.

A family affair

Empire was a royal family affair from the start, then. It also touched Victoria's court and household. After all, the form of government chosen by the British to run the empire was royal – that is to say, the system of crown colonies. The executive powers of the governors of crown colonies were granted in the name of the monarch and, over time, colonial governors acquired the forms and ceremony of royalty. Who better to send out as governors than men who knew from close observation how a monarch was supposed to behave?

That is what happened, especially in India, where the run of governors-general and viceroys included several former palace insiders: the Marquess of Dalhousie (1848–56), Viscount Charles Canning (1856–62) and the Earl of Dufferin (1884–88). It could be seen elsewhere, too – for example, in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka (7th Viscount Torrington, 1847–50); New South Wales (Lord Carrington, 1885–90); Nova Scotia, Queensland, New Zealand and Victoria (2nd Marquess of Normanby, 1858–84); and the new Commonwealth of Australia (Lord Hopetoun, 1900–02).

All of these men started in service at Windsor Castle. They took with them their habits of private correspondence with the queen, providing her in some cases with an almost weekly account of colonial affairs. Their wives went too, and vicereines such as Lady Charlotte Canning and Lady Hariot Dufferin sent home to the queen photographs, sketches, newspaper clippings and eyewitness accounts of life in India.

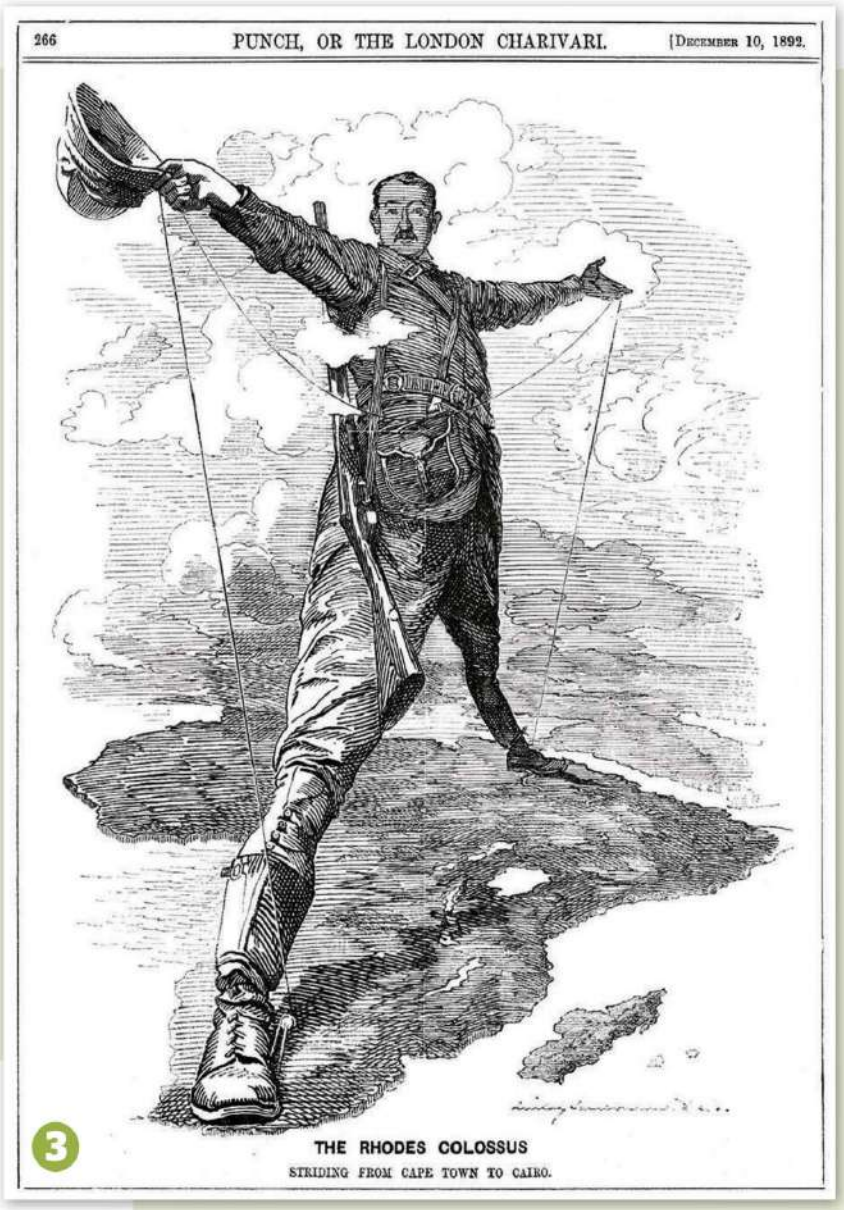
Crown colonies were not the only form of empire in the 19th century. Behaving like the multinational economic conglomerates of modern times, corporations

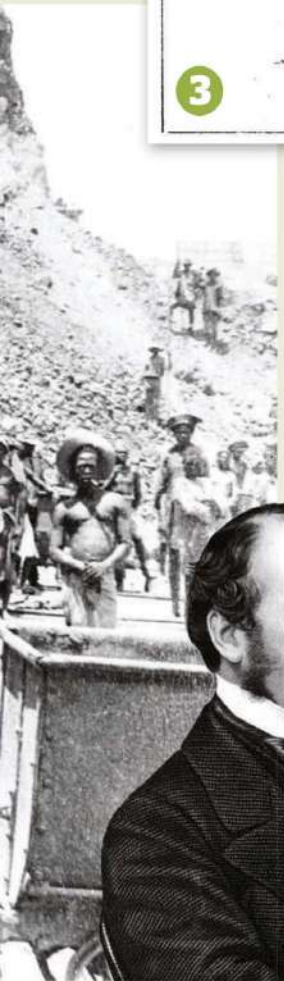


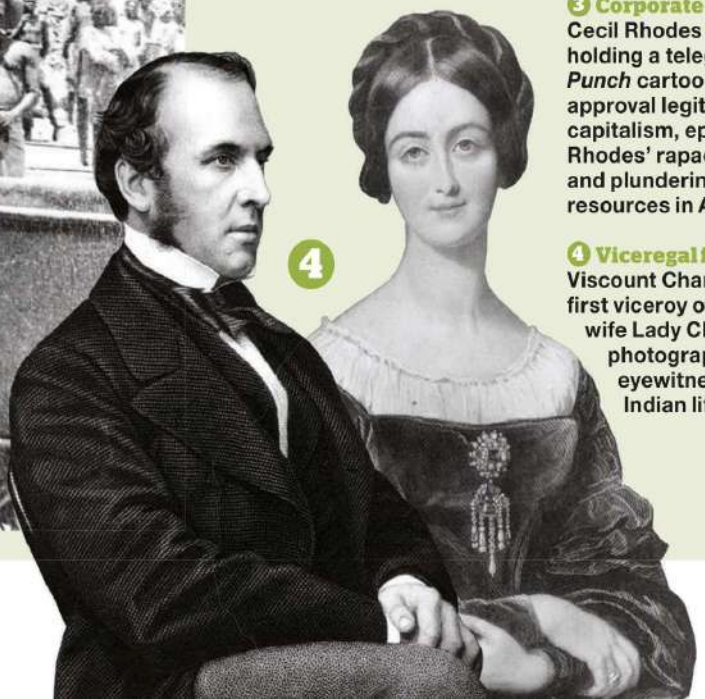


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1 Prince on tour
The Prince of Wales (later Edward VII, back row, second left) poses with his hunting party and a dead tiger during his visit to India in 1875–76. Victoria's sons were groomed for imperial leadership through tours of her overseas dominions

2 Mining the empire
Zulu men work the De Beers diamond mine in Kimberley, South Africa, c1885. Discoveries of such mineral resources were among the factors that fuelled the 'scramble for Africa' by European colonising powers in the late 19th century

3 Corporate giant
Cecil Rhodes straddles Africa, holding a telegraph wire, in a *Punch* cartoon of 1892. Royal approval legitimised corporate capitalism, epitomised by Rhodes' rapacious land-grabs and plundering of natural resources in Africa

4 Viceregal family
Viscount Charles Canning, the first viceroy of India, and his wife Lady Charlotte, who sent photographs, sketches and eyewitness accounts of Indian life to the queen

Never quite as jingoistic as many other Britons, Victoria nonetheless endorsed the expansion of the empire. **"It is to prevent war and bloodshed that we must do this," she told Disraeli in 1879**

played a large part in the expansion of British imperialism. They did so with the approval of the queen through the instrument of a royal charter. The biggest chartered company of all, the East India Company, lost its charter in 1858 when, following the Indian rebellion the previous year, the government of India transferred to the crown. But there was a resurgence of corporate capitalism during the so-called 'scramble for Africa' and the carve-up of the Indonesian archipelago by the European powers in the 1880s and 1890s.

Colonising ventures, such as Cecil Rhodes' infamous British South Africa Company, were signed off by the queen, their rapine and aggressive tactics given a flimsy legitimacy by the royal touch. Lest we think that the queen signed off these charters as a matter of routine, it is worth noting that most of the directors of Rhodes' company were courtiers, including Alexander Duff, the Duke of Fife, who married the queen's granddaughter, Louise, in 1889, the same year that the British South Africa Company was founded.

Through Duff, Victoria met Rhodes a few years later. She confided to her journal that "he said that he had had great difficulties, but that since I had seen him last, he had added 12,000 miles of territory to my Dominions, & that he believed in time the whole would come under my rule".

Never quite as jingoistic as many other Britons, Victoria nonetheless endorsed expansion of the empire: "The Native Sovereigns cannot maintain their authority… It is not for aggrandisement, but to

prevent war and bloodshed that we must do this," she told Disraeli in 1879.

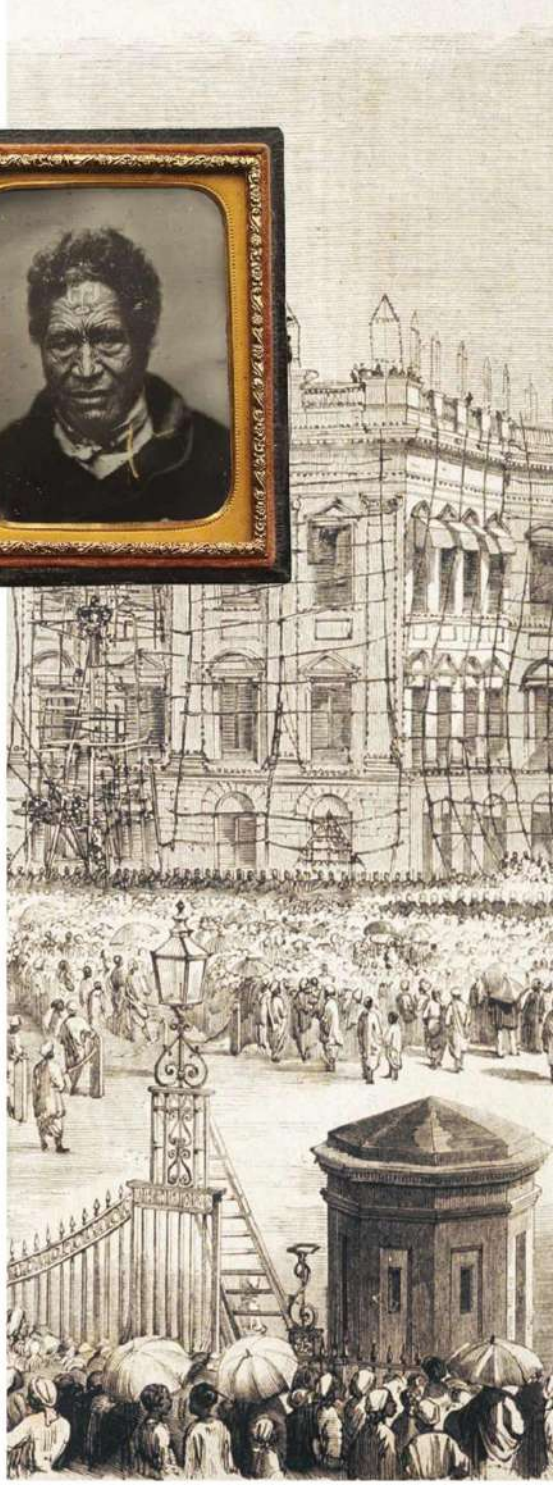
The queen was a not-unwitting accomplice to empire in other ways, too. From the start of her reign to the close, she signed all of the treaties between Britain and its colonial dependencies, in so doing formalising the legality of imperial rule. This sort of "empire by treaty" was, as historian Saliha Belmessous and others have recently shown, a key part of European colonialism. It ensured that Victoria was personally identified with the new colonies.

Perhaps the best example of this was in New Zealand, where the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, mediated by European missionaries, was in effect an agreement between the queen and the Māori *iwi* (tribes) in which she pledged her protection in return for their allegiance to the crown. Were such treaties worth the parchment on which they were written? In some cases, such as in New Zealand, very much so: they have become keystones of modern law, with implications for other countries such as Canada and Australia where there remains a long legacy of colonial appropriation of indigenous land and other customary rights.

At the time, Victoria certainly believed her promises to be anything but empty. Between 1852 and 1863, four sets of Māori chiefs came to London and were given personal audiences with the queen. There were other occasions, too, when she stepped up to protect indigenous rights. In 1882, she met with the Zulu king Cetshwayo to hear his complaints over the loss of his territory after British forces invaded in 1879, sparking the Anglo-Zulu War. And in 1887, she granted a royal audience to Princess Lili'uokalani and Queen Kapi'olani of the royal family of Hawai'i, as their kingdom faced conspiracies from within and a covetous United States from without.







TOP **Tāmati Wāka Nene, an influential Māori *rangatira* (chief) who helped persuade *iwi* (tribes) to sign the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, establishing the British governorship of New Zealand**
ABOVE **Queen Kapi'olani of Hawai'i, pictured during her visit to Britain for Queen Victoria's golden jubilee celebrations in 1887**

The crown's jewel

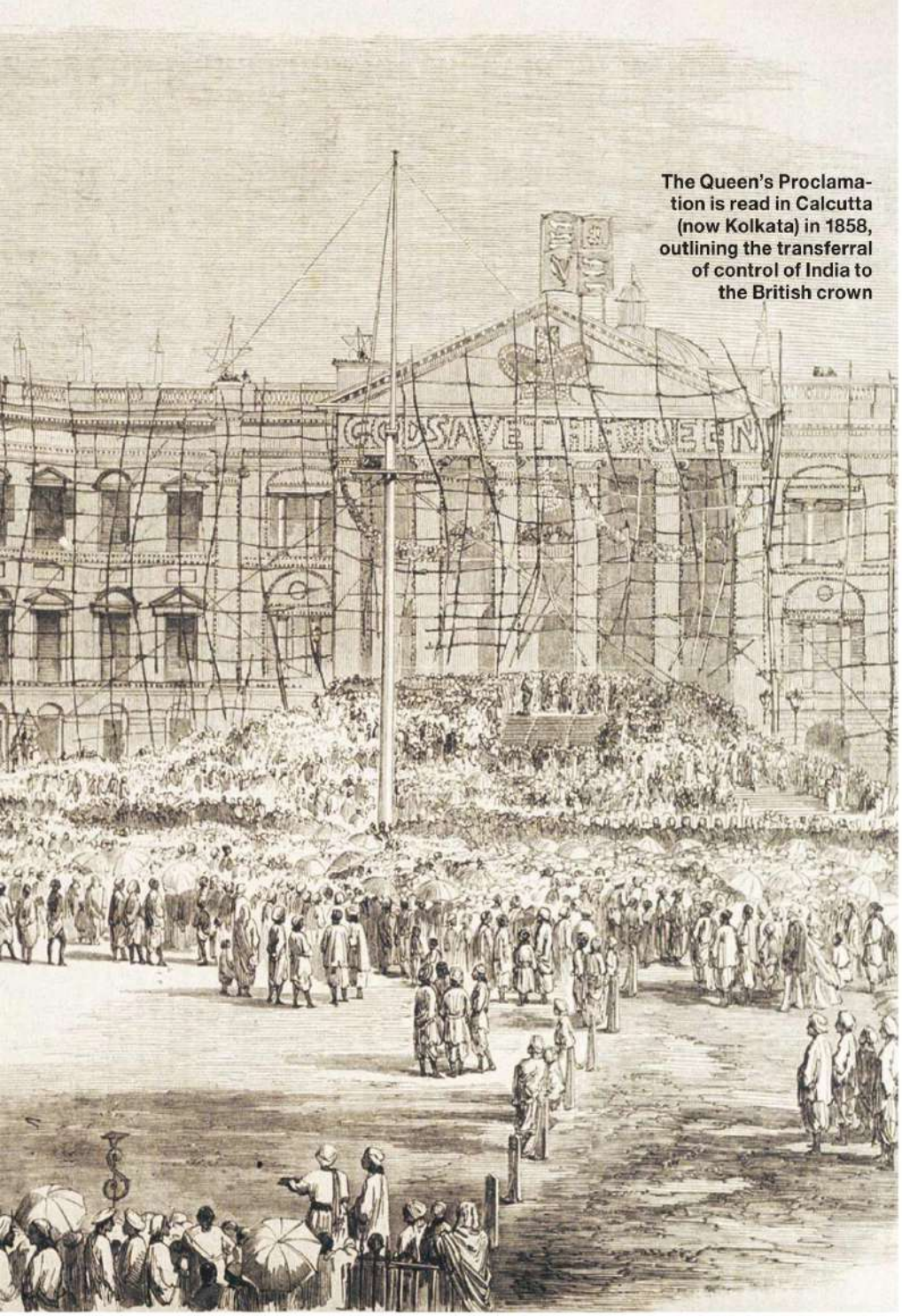
Of course, it is in her attitudes to India, the 'jewel in the crown', that Queen Victoria's character as an imperial ruler is revealed most clearly. It all started long before Disraeli suggested she become an empress. Almost from the off, Victoria and Albert were addicted to the empire in India. They celebrated the end of the Anglo-Afghan War in 1842 as though it were a victory. They urged on the Indian troops and sailors who took part in the opium wars with China around the same time. And they lapped up the loot that flowed from India during the 1840s and 1850s – the gilded booty that spoke of the subjugation of the subcontinent.

The queen was particularly keen on owning the actual regalia of defeated Indian leaders. The crown of the Mughal Emperor and king of Delhi (paid for with her own cash after the rebellion of 1857 was suppressed) and the throne of the last Sikh ruler, Ranjit Singh, both came her way. And literally topping out this haul was the Koh-i-Noor diamond, taken from Lahore in 1849 and made a personal gift to the queen by Lord Dalhousie, the governor-general – "a historical emblem of conquest", as Victoria noted in her journal.

There was human collateral, too. In 1854 Maharaja Duleep Singh, teenage heir to the Sikh kingdom of Punjab, was whisked away to Windsor by the British, where he became part of the extended royal family. There he joined another Indian royal, Princess Gowramma of Coorg, literally traded by her father in return for concessions from the colonial authorities. At the same time, as in New Zealand and later in southern Africa, India brought out the queen's sense of benevolence and remote justice. The Queen's Proclamation of 1858, published in India to explain the transfer of power from the East India Company to the crown, was the manifesto of a monarch. Translated into many of the vernacular scripts of India and distributed across the country, even to remote villages, the proclamation pledged the queen to respect Indian religions, not to take any more territory from the maharajas, and to improve the economy.

Most significantly, Victoria announced that her Indian subjects were to be treated in the same way as her subjects everywhere else in the British empire. Rapidly, the

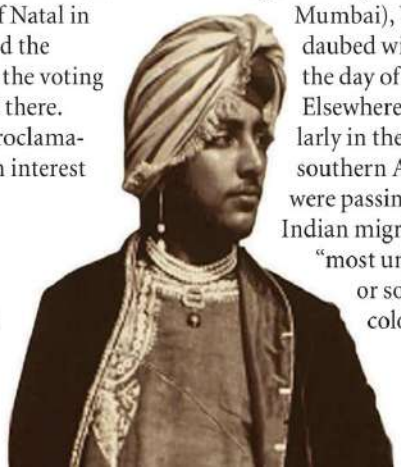
BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY



The Queen's Proclamation is read in Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1858, outlining the transferral of control of India to the British crown

proclamation developed iconic status, revered as an 'Indian Magna Carta', providing Indian reformers of all sorts with a stick and a drum to beat back at the colonial officials in India. Up to the end of the 19th century, the queen's words inspired Indian nationalists – not least a young Mohandas Gandhi who, as a lawyer in the colony of Natal in southern Africa, invoked the proclamation to defend the voting rights of Indians settled there. The popularity of the proclamation also spurred Indian interest in Queen Victoria. By the end of her reign, hundreds of biographies of the queen, many of them illustrated, had been published in India, dwelling on her virtues as a woman, a widow and a wise ruler.

Such fame and acclaim could not last. In the final years of her reign, imperial loyalism began to wane. In Bombay (now Mumbai), Victoria's statue was daubed with tar by protesters on the day of her diamond jubilee. Elsewhere in the empire, particularly in the Australian states and southern Africa, white politicians were passing legislation to keep out Indian migrants – a racial policy "most unpalatable" to the queen, or so Joseph Chamberlain, the colonial secretary, told the colonial prime ministers who came to London in 1897.



Duleep Singh, exiled maharaja of the Sikh empire, pictured at Osborne House in 1854

Victoria announced that her Indian subjects were to be treated the same way as her subjects everywhere... **the proclamation was revered as an 'Indian Magna Carta'**

Colonial strife struck home in the royal family, too. One grandson and one son-in-law lost their lives during military campaigns: Prince Christian Victor in 1900 in the Second Boer War, and Prince Henry of Battenberg in 1896 during the Ashanti War (in what's now Ghana), both victims of malaria.

Even after Victoria died, the empire continued to grow apace, reaching its zenith in 1920. Her birthday, 24 May, was made an official public holiday – Empire Day – during the First World War, and was celebrated in many countries until the 1950s.

Even though she never travelled farther west than Ireland, or much farther east than Berlin, Victoria's empire dominated her world. To this day, the rich yet complex story of Queen Victoria as an imperial ruler is there for all to see in the artefacts that remain in her homes. In the Queen's Gallery at Buckingham Palace, displays have included an opium box and Yoruba wooden carvings of Victoria from Nigeria. Māori chiefs' cloaks can be seen at Osborne, where the Indo-Saracenic Durbar Room is another reminder of her fascination with India. Elsewhere, the Koh-i-Noor diamond is embedded in the crown jewels in the Tower of London, while captured Sikh cannon are lined up on the terrace at Windsor Castle. All remind us of a queen who made – and was made by – empire. ■

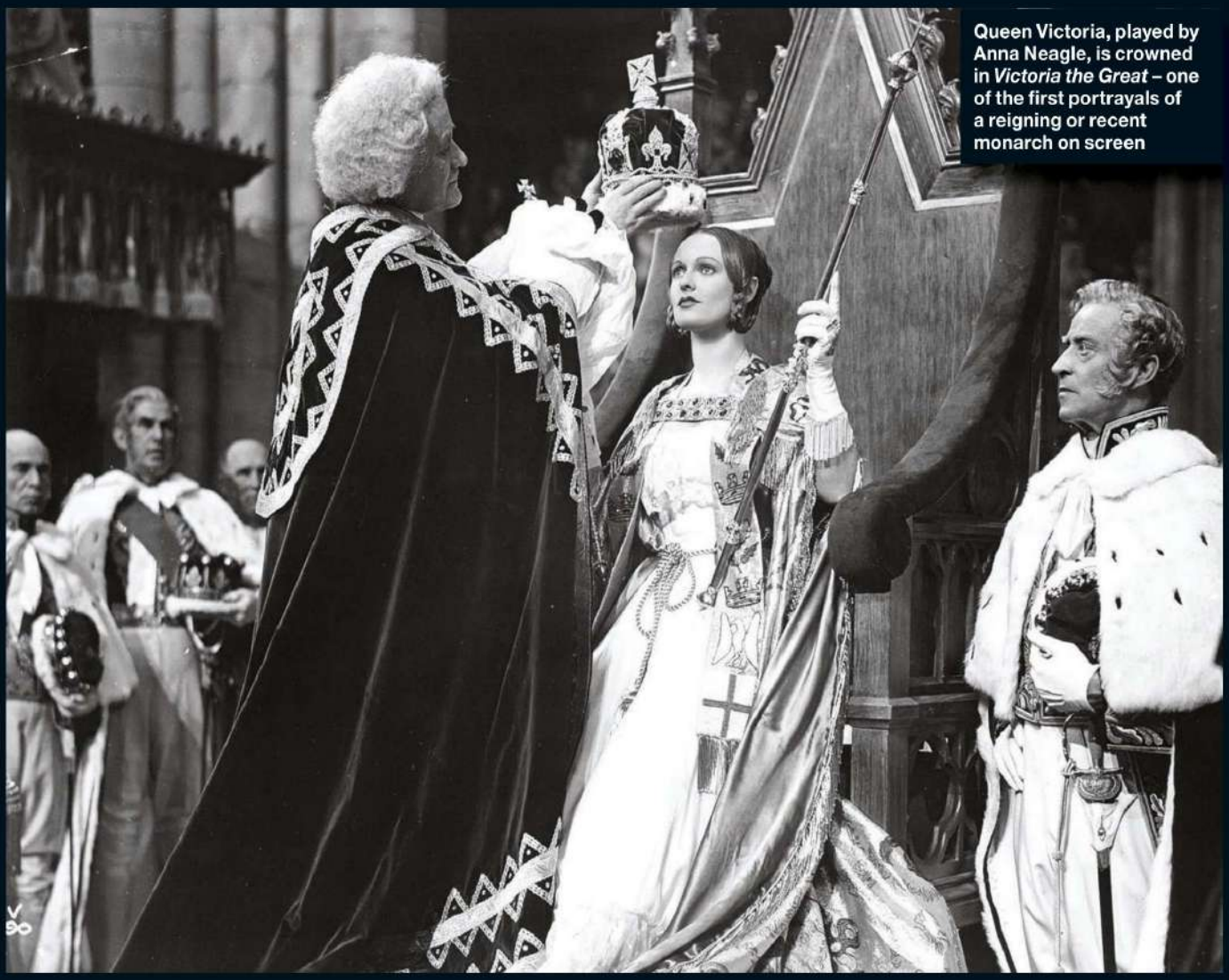
Miles Taylor is professor of modern history at the University of York, and author of *Empress: Queen Victoria and India* (Yale University Press, 2018)

THE QUEEN ON SCREEN



RIGHT TO LEFT **Queen Victoria as portrayed by Anna Neagle (1937), Emily Blunt (2009) and Dame Judi Dench (2017)**

How can the lengthy life and reign of such a complex character as Queen Victoria be encapsulated in a film? **Ted Powell** reviews three memorable portrayals of the monarch on screen, from an early biopic to recent dramas



Queen Victoria, played by Anna Neagle, is crowned in *Victoria the Great* – one of the first portrayals of a reigning or recent monarch on screen

1 Victoria the Great (Director: Herbert Wilcox, 1937)

A nostalgic biopic appealing to the British public in the troubled years of the late 1930s

In the early 20th century, censorship rules proscribed the representation of reigning or recent monarchs on stage or screen. The ban on portrayals of Queen Victoria was not lifted until 1937, the centenary of her accession, which was also the year of the coronation of her great-grandson, King George VI. *Victoria the Great*, the first 'talkie' film biography of the queen, appeared later that year, with Anna Neagle in the title role. It was a huge critical and popular success – so much so that a sequel, *Sixty Glorious Years*, was made the following year.

Victoria the Great is less than two hours long, but manages to cover much of her reign. The initial scenes concentrate on Victoria's private life, with the familiar story of her accession, the meeting and marriage with Prince Albert, and her eventual acceptance of Albert as her partner and adviser in ruling. In a famous scene, cloying by modern standards, Victoria meekly submits to Albert as her husband after an argument over his exclusion from affairs of state.

The great statesmen of the age all make an appearance, from the Duke of Wellington and Lord Palmerston to Gladstone and Disraeli. The film is in black and white but the climax, shot in Technicolor, shows the old queen, beloved of her people, receiving the acclaim of the crowds amid the pomp and pageantry of her diamond jubilee in 1897.

The second film, meanwhile, concentrates more on the queen's public role, running through a cavalcade of the major events of her reign, such as the repeal of the corn laws, the charge of the Light Brigade and the Great Exhibition of 1851.

After the First World War and the Great Depression, **Victoria's reign seemed like a golden age of prosperity and stability**

Not surprisingly, as an early example of its kind, *Victoria the Great* was hagiography; indeed, nowadays it might almost be viewed as propaganda for the monarchy. The reverent tone of the film is very different from the "this is what they are really like" flavour of modern films about Queen Elizabeth II and her family. Victoria is presented as a symbolic, almost sacred figure, dutifully discharging the heavy burdens of state.

The film's success was no doubt due in part to its nostalgic appeal. In the uncertain years of the late 1930s, after the horrors of the First World War and the trauma of the Great Depression, Victoria's reign seemed like a golden age of prosperity and stability. Like many others, Queen Mary, widow of George V, who attended a showing of *Sixty Glorious Years* in 1938, was seen leaving the cinema in tears. After the shock of Edward VIII's abdication in 1936, *Victoria the Great* helped to reinforce the idea of the monarchy as central to the identity of the nation at a time of turbulence and crisis.

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY/SHUTTERSTOCK

2 The Young Victoria (Jean-Marc Vallée, 2009)

A sumptuous but historically accurate portrayal of the queen's early reign

Released a decade ago, *The Young Victoria* has since been overshadowed by the success of the TV series *Victoria*. This is a shame, because it is a high-quality historical drama offering an excellent introduction to the reign of Queen Victoria. It boasts an all-star cast and a top-flight production team including Martin Scorsese, Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of York and Julian Fellowes, creator of *Downton Abbey*. Its authenticity is enhanced by the use of famous English locations such as Hampton Court and Blenheim Palace.

The Young Victoria deftly interweaves the familiar royal themes of romance, family and political events. The plot is driven by the struggle of the men around Victoria to control her destiny as she approaches her succession to the throne. They include Sir John Conroy, the domineering comptroller of the household of her mother, the Duchess of Kent; her uncle King Leopold of Belgium, who schemes for a British alliance; and the wily prime minister, Lord Melbourne.

Caught in the middle is Victoria herself, a spirited teenager eager to break out of the suffocating constraints of the 'Kensington system' imposed on her by Conroy and her mother. As soon as she becomes queen, she distances them from court. However, there is still the vexed question of whom she will marry, as princes and politicians vie for influence.

Fortunately, she falls in love with one of the candidates, the handsome young Prince Albert. In a key scene, they play chess together. Victoria admits that she feels like a pawn in a game played by others. Albert replies: "You had better master the rules of the game until you play it better than they can." He offers to play it with her: the rest is history.

The central performances of Emily Blunt as Victoria and Rupert Friend as Albert are well balanced and convincing, and their chemistry is palpable. Jim Broadbent almost steals the show with a wonderful cameo portrayal of Victoria's eccentric uncle King William IV. In a memorable but historically accurate scene, at his birthday celebrations he insults Victoria's mother, and prays that he may live long enough to prevent her from becoming regent. In the event, he did just that, dying just a few weeks after Victoria attained her majority on her 18th birthday.

The film scores high marks for historical accuracy, and manages to capture the febrile atmosphere surrounding Victoria's succession. Purists may cavil that Prince Albert was not wounded in an assassination attempt on the queen, and that Lord Melbourne looks far too young, but on the whole it sticks close to the historical record and avoids the temptation to turn Victoria into a feminist icon. At the end of the film we see Prince Albert moving his desk into his wife's study, as a contrite Victoria accepts that he has finally won the struggle to control her.

The Young Victoria manages to **capture the febrile atmosphere surrounding Victoria's succession**



SHUTTERSTOCK

The chemistry between Emily Blunt (Victoria) and Rupert Friend (Albert) is palpable in this 2009 biopic



Judi Dench plays the ageing Queen Victoria for the second time, alongside Ali Fazal as her "Munshi", Abdul Karim

ALAMY

3 Victoria and Abdul (Stephen Frears, 2017)

A touching tale of friendship between a cantankerous queen and her Indian servant

Based on the book of the same name by Shrabani Basu, *Victoria and Abdul* tells the story of the close friendship between the elderly Queen Victoria and her Indian servant, Abdul Karim, whom she called "the Munshi" (teacher). Abdul came to Britain in 1887 to take part in the queen's golden jubilee celebrations. Victoria took a shine to the handsome young clerk, and appointed him her Indian secretary. He remained a firm favourite for the rest of the queen's life, apparently filling the emotional void left by the death of her beloved Scottish servant, John Brown. She showered him with gifts and honours, and promoted him within the royal household, much to the outrage of her British servants.

Visually stunning, the film is at its best when portraying the stifling artificiality of court life. The tone is set at the beginning with a brilliant – and very funny – set piece depiction of the jubilee banquet. A grumpy queen races through the courses, forcing her guests to bolt their food before the dishes are cleared away. Judi Dench, as Victoria, effortlessly dominates the film. Having previously played the middle-aged queen in *Mrs Brown* (1997), with Billy Connolly as Brown, she thoroughly inhabits this role. She manages to win our sympathy for the ageing, emotionally isolated queen, while leaving no doubt as to how impossible she must have been.

Victoria and Abdul is less sure-footed when dealing with the delicate issue of the racist assumptions underpinning the British Raj, veering uneasily between comedy and indignation. Victoria aside, British characters are all depicted as racist buffoons. However, the Indian characters are themselves little more than caricatures. Abdul's sidekick Mohammed Buksh is played mainly for laughs, though he dies at the end of the film, a victim of the foul British climate. Abdul, played by Ali Fazal, is seen too much through Victoria's eyes as the exotic Indian servant, and he remains a rather two-dimensional character. We are offered neither a hard-hitting critique of British colonialism nor a more nuanced exploration of the relationship between Britain and India at the height of Victorian imperialism.

> Judi Dench wins our sympathy for the ageing, emotionally isolated queen, **while leaving no doubt as to how impossible she was**

The historical authenticity of the film is also undermined by some clunky and anachronistic dialogue. "What could possibly go wrong?" asks Abdul, as he pulls the emergency cord on the royal train. "I didn't do seven years at Edinburgh University to look at Indian dicks!" fulminates the queen's doctor, James Reid, on being instructed to examine the Munshi. But does this matter? After all, *Victoria and Abdul* is drama, not documentary. It portrays a touching and unlikely love story with charm and wit. As a vehicle for Judi Dench to reprise her role as the cantankerous Queen Victoria, it succeeds triumphantly. It is an enjoyable movie – just don't take it as history. H

QUEEN VICTORIA'S **FINAL DAYS**

The idea of the throne without Victoria on it seemed impossible for many to contemplate – including her family, the royal household and the government. **Stewart Richards** explores the queen's last days and the chaotic scramble to prepare for her funeral



A portrait of Queen Victoria by Bertha Muller, after an 1899 original by Heinrich von Angeli. As the 19th century waned, the queen became almost blind and suffered lapses of memory

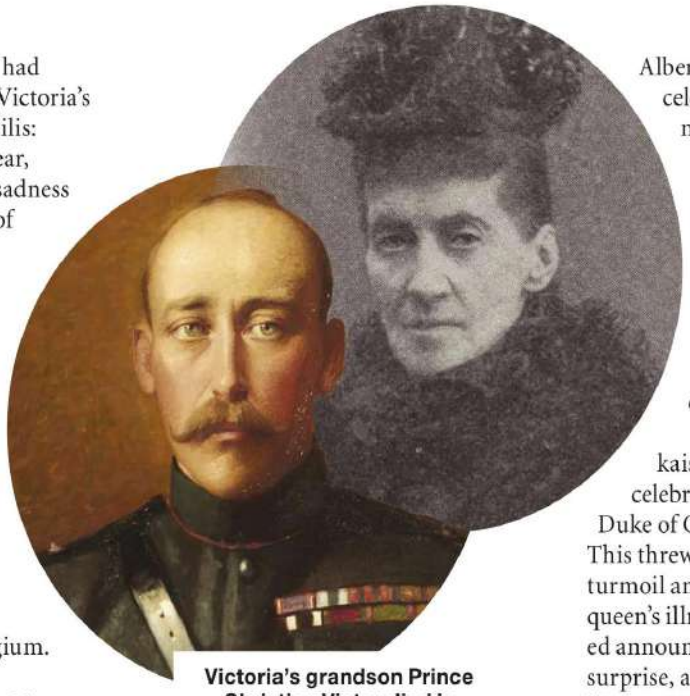
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The year 1900 had been Queen Victoria's annus horribilis: "a horrible year, nothing but sadness and horrors of one kind & another," she wrote.

The Boer War (1899–1902, fought between Britain and two Afrikaner republics) weighed heavily on her mind, and the lifting of the sieges at Mafeking and Ladysmith in early 1900 had done little to relieve her anxiety. In April, a young boy protesting against the war had shot at the queen's eldest son, the Prince of Wales, as he travelled through Belgium.

Her eldest daughter –Vicky, the Dowager Empress of Germany – had been diagnosed with incurable breast cancer that had spread to her spine, and the empress was languishing in great pain in her castle in Kronberg. In August 1900, a telegram had arrived announcing that the queen's favourite son – the chain-smoking, heavy-drinking Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh – had died from throat cancer. "Oh! God! my poor darling Affie gone too! My 3rd Grown up child. It is hard at 81!" she wrote.

A few weeks later, she received the news that her much-loved grandson Prince Christian Victor, eldest son of her daughter Princess Helena, had succumbed to enteric fever while serving with the British Army in South Africa. And on Christmas Day, Jane, Lady Churchill, the queen's oldest and most trusted friend, was found dead in her bed while staying with the queen at Osborne House. "I am sending for my mourning trappings" observed Marie Mallet, maid of honour to the queen, "we never escape jet for long."



Victoria's grandson Prince Christian Victor died in October 1900, and her oldest friend Lady Churchill died on Christmas Eve – less than a month before the queen

The end is nigh

As the 19th century ended, Queen Victoria was not her usual self. She was visibly fading: her voracious appetite had disappeared and she had lost almost half her body weight. She was confined to a wheelchair, almost blind, and she suffered lapses of memory and moments of confusion. Yet no one could contemplate the mortality of the little old lady who had sat on the throne for over 63 years. Her children were in denial, her government was unprepared, and the public knew nothing at all of her condition. Victoria's own view of the future was bleak, writing: "Another year begun, I am feeling so weak and unwell, that I enter upon it sadly."

As the 19th century, ended, Queen Victoria was not her usual self. **She was visibly fading and had lost almost half her body weight**

Victoria's terminal decline was rapid, and took the family by surprise. Her children squabbled, her doctors quarrelled, and the public were misled and kept in the dark.

Sir James Reid, the queen's personal physician for over 20 years, had long recognised that the end was nigh. However, he had faced great difficulty convincing the royal family of the inevitable, even in the final days when they saw that the queen was drifting between delirium and lucidity.

Princess Helena and Princess Beatrice, the queen's daughters and constant companions, could not accept that their mother could actually die, and tried to maintain business as usual. The Prince of Wales was reluctant to cancel his weekend jaunts to the country. The Duke of Connaught, seventh child of Victoria and Albert, left for Berlin on 14 January to celebrate 200 years of the Prussian monarchy. Even as the queen faded at the end, on 16 January members of the royal family enjoyed a performance of *English Nell* in London's West End. In desperation, on 18 January Reid secretly telegraphed the queen's grandson, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany.

On receipt of the telegram, the kaiser immediately cancelled the celebrations in Berlin and left with the Duke of Connaught to set sail for England. This threw the squabbling family into turmoil and forced them to make the queen's illness public news. This unexpected announcement took the nation by surprise, and rumours began to abound. "Queen Unconscious, Sinking Fast" read one headline on 21 January; "Queen Rallying: Has Eaten and Slept. Official" read another.

The queen had been as reluctant to accept her mortality as those around her, and had indeed appeared to rally. "Am I better?" she asked Sir James, "I should like to live a little longer, as I have still a few things to settle." As if her trusted doctor could make her live, he kindly reassured her: "Yes, your majesty has been very ill but you are now better." Meanwhile, the Prince of Wales and his sisters tried to prevent the kaiser from reaching Osborne.

Victoria's health took a dramatic turn for the worse from 17 January. She suffered a series of strokes, and the entire royal family was summoned to the Isle of Wight. The government ground to a halt as the queen became unable to carry out her constitutional duties. There were talks of a regency, while Osborne House – already overflowing with guests – was bombarded with anxious telegrams and telephone calls, and journalists gathered excitedly outside the gates.

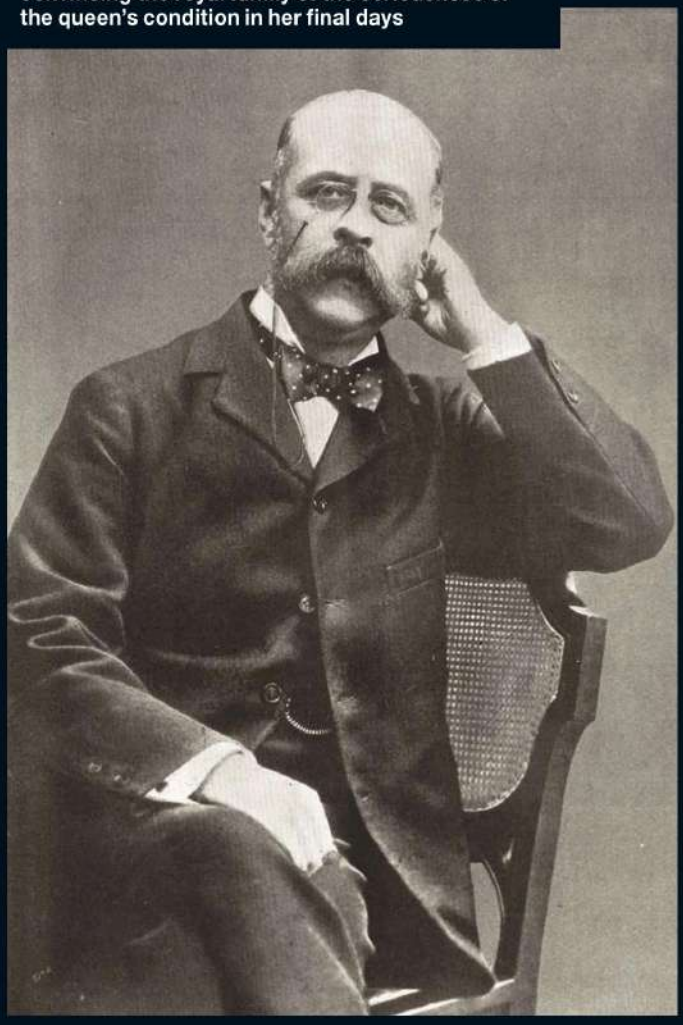
As the queen began to sink, the family crowded into her small bedroom where the Bishop of Winchester and the rector of St Mildred's Church chanted prayers and hymns. The kaiser sat motionless at her left side for more than two hours, propping her up with his one good arm (he had been born with a withered left arm), while Sir James Reid sat on her right, holding her hand. Meanwhile, a young nurse knelt on the back of the bed, supporting the queen's head.

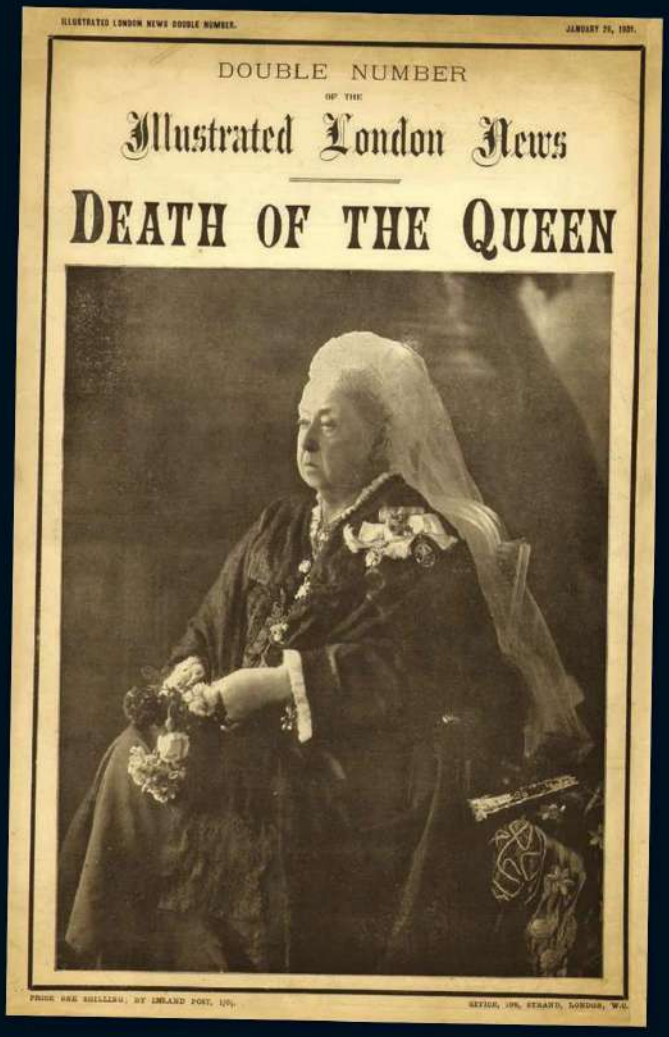
Victoria, conscious but unable to see, lamented repeatedly: "Sir James, I'm very ill." Each time Reid replied: "Your majesty will soon be better."

BRIDGEMAN



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP **Reporters gather outside the gates of Osborne House in January 1901, awaiting news of the queen; a commemorative issue of the *Illustrated London News,* 26 January 1901, marking Victoria's death; Sir James Reid, the queen's personal physician, who had difficulty convincing the royal family of the seriousness of the queen's condition in her final days**





ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS DOUBLE NUMBER. JANUARY 26, 1901.

DOUBLE NUMBER

OF THE

Illustrated London News

DEATH OF THE QUEEN

PRICE ONE SHILLING; BY INLAND POST, 1/3. OFFICE, 198, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.

MARY EVANS/ALAMY

As the room filled with the sound of sobbing and weeping mingled with the chanting of the clerics, each son, daughter and grandchild was summoned by name to kiss the queen's hand and say farewell.

Shortly after 6.30pm on Tuesday 22 January 1901, Police Superintendent Fraser ordered the household police to surround Osborne House. All telephone and telegraph wires were to be suspended, and servants and messengers prevented from leaving. Osborne was surrounded by police to stop the news leaking out before the new king, Edward VII, had concluded the necessary formalities.

A short while later, Fraser walked down the long gravel drive to the entrance gate, where a large crowd including a number of journalists was waiting, and pinned a small notice to the bulletin board:

"Osborne House, January 22, 6.45pm

Her Majesty the Queen breathed her last at 6.30pm, surrounded by her children and grand-children."

And so the news of the queen's passing was announced to the world.

A crowd of carriages set off at gallop. Bicycles careered down the hill, and men ran along, bawling at the top of their voices: "Queen dead!" All of this could be seen and heard as the journalists rushed down to the harbour to break the news to the world.

A black-bordered special edition of *The London Evening News* was printed and on the street within the hour. Theatre performances were interrupted as audiences poured out into the streets. The 'Great Tom' bell of St Paul's tolled across the city of London.

Across the nation, people gathered in small groups to sing 'God Save the Queen', and by eight o'clock shop windows were dressed in black mourning. Queues ten deep formed at Whiteley's department store in London as customers lined up to purchase their black mourning outfits.



ABOVE **The queen's coffin is taken on a gun carriage from Osborne House to Cowes for the journey to Portsmouth aboard the *Alberta* on 1 February 1901**
RIGHT **Order of service for a special memorial held in Halifax to mark the funeral, and a commemorative programme for the funeral procession on 2 February 1901**

Chaos and confusion

Victoria's death stunned the nation – not least her family, the court and the government. What followed was chaos and confusion. There was no one alive who could remember how to bury a monarch, and the queen had specified a full military state funeral.

Panic broke out in the royal household as the members realised that all precedents were 64 years out of date, and that nobody knew what to do. "The ignorance of historical precedent in men whose business it is to know is wonderful," wrote Reginald Brett, Viscount Esher. "I cannot describe to you the historical ignorance, of everyone from top to bottom – who should know something of procedure. You would think that the English Monarchy had [not] been buried since the time of Alfred."

Panic also gripped the government when the queen's personal instructions for her funeral were revealed. Previous royal funerals had been private, candlelit affairs, taking place at night, but Victoria had requested a full military state funeral.

Theatre performances were interrupted as audiences poured out... **The 'Great Tom' bell of St Paul's tolled across the city of London**

No embalming, no lying in state, no mourning black – she wanted a white funeral, with white ponies and a gun carriage. It was to be the first burial of a monarch outside the confines of Westminster Abbey or St George's Chapel in Windsor since George I in 1727.

The situation rapidly descended into a shambles. The Earl Marshal (the royal officer in charge of organising royal ceremonies and processions) and Lord Chamberlain (in charge of the royal household) were at loggerheads about who should take charge of funeral preparations.

Meanwhile, the household of the new king, Edward VII (the queen's eldest son, known to the family as Bertie before his accession), refused to take over responsibility until Victoria was buried – yet the old queen's household no longer had any authority. The accession council was hastily convened – from which the Lord Mayor had to be forcibly ejected – and, to the consternation of those present, the king extemporised his accession speech.

GETTY IMAGES





The *Royal Sovereign* waits to carry the queen's coffin from Paddington to Windsor on 2 February 1901



Halifax Parish Church.

ORDER OF

Memorial Service

on the day of

THE FUNERAL

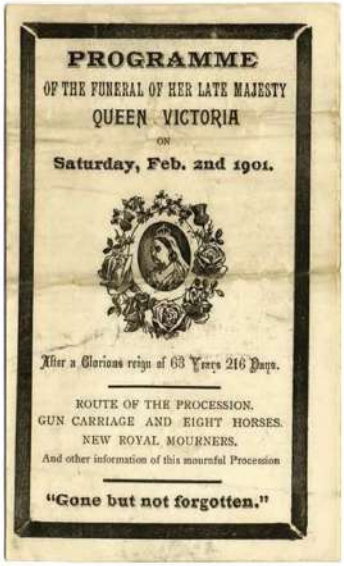
— of —

HER GRACIOUS MAJESTY

Victoria,

Saturday, February 2nd, 1901.

"So He giveth His beloved sleep."



PROGRAMME

OF THE FUNERAL OF HER LATE MAJESTY

QUEEN VICTORIA

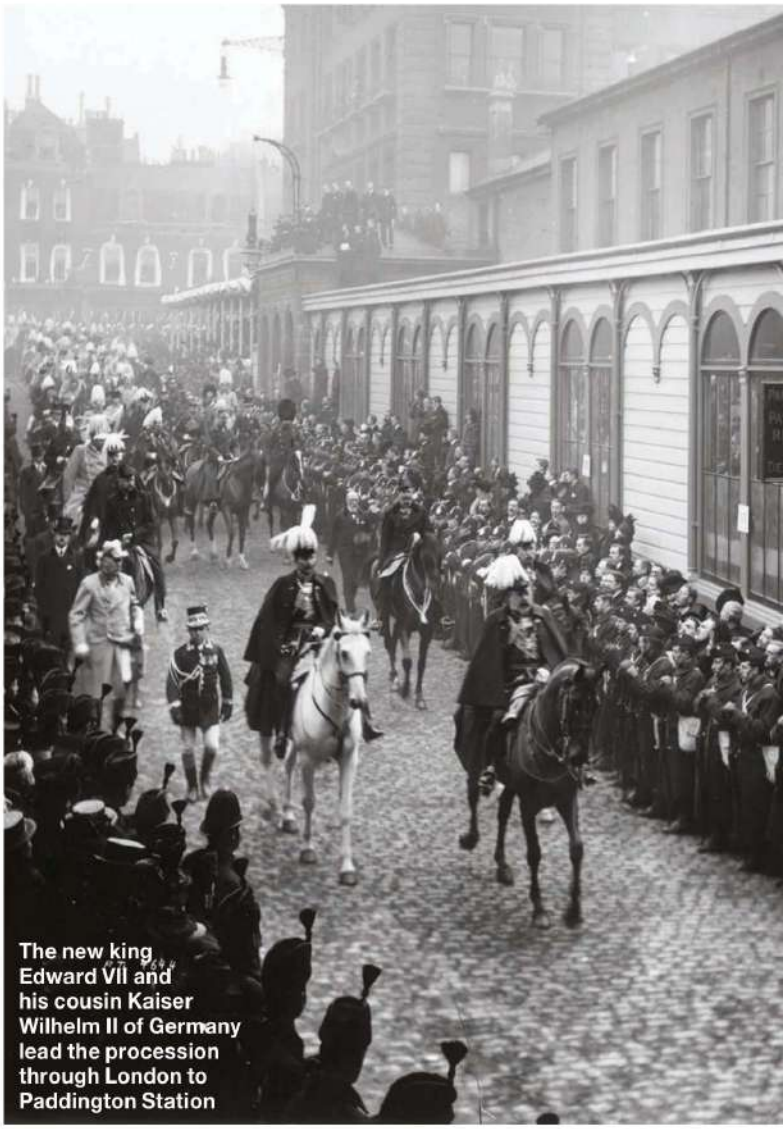
ON

Saturday, Feb. 2nd 1901.

After a Glorious reign of 63 Years 216 Days.

ROUTE OF THE PROCESSION.
GUN CARRIAGE AND EIGHT HORSES.
NEW ROYAL MOURNERS.
And other information of this mournful Procession

"Gone but not forgotten."



The new king Edward VII and his cousin Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany lead the procession through London to Paddington Station

The casting of a death mask was ordered by the kaiser, causing uproar among the royal family: it was known that the queen had disliked the creation of such masks. The Duke of York was suddenly struck down by a dangerous illness. The royal undertaker arrived from London – but forgot to bring the coffin. And the kaiser turned on the Bishop of Winchester, who had been the queen's favourite cleric, saying that if he were *his* cleric he would have him hauled out into the courtyard by the neck and shot.

Sir Frederick Ponsonby, the queen's assistant private secretary, travelled to London to meet the Earl Marshal – only the discover the latter's office in total chaos, with no arrangements completed. In desperation, he called on Lord Roberts, the newly appointed commander-in-chief of the British Army, who gave Ponsonby carte blanche to organise the military as he saw fit. By that time, only a few days remained in which to finalise the ceremony.

In the event, the royal coffin was built by a local carpenter and delivered to Osborne House. Sir James Reid prepared the queen with the help of Mrs Tuck, Victoria's devoted dresser, scattering charcoal on the floor of the coffin to combat the smell and absorb moisture. They cut her hair, dressed her in a white silk dressing gown with garter ribbon and star, and placed her wedding veil over her face. Then they summoned the royal dukes, the kaiser and the new king to lift her body into the coffin.

Victoria's beloved Scottish servant John Brown, pictured c1870. His mother's wedding ring was placed on the queen's finger in her coffin

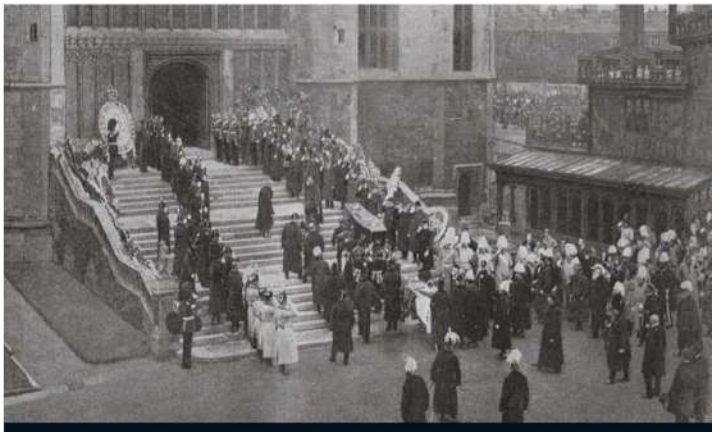


The family then retired, leaving Reid and Mrs Tuck to carry out the queen's secret instructions – never to be revealed to her children. They placed on her finger the wedding ring of the mother of her Scottish servant, John Brown, and a photograph of Brown and a lock of his hair were laid beside her, along with his pocket handkerchief, all carefully hidden from view. The queen was now ready for her final journey.

As the date of the funeral approached, the processional route was prepared. Some 33,000 soldiers arrived in London and had to be fed and billeted. Advertisements offered seats in windows and balconies

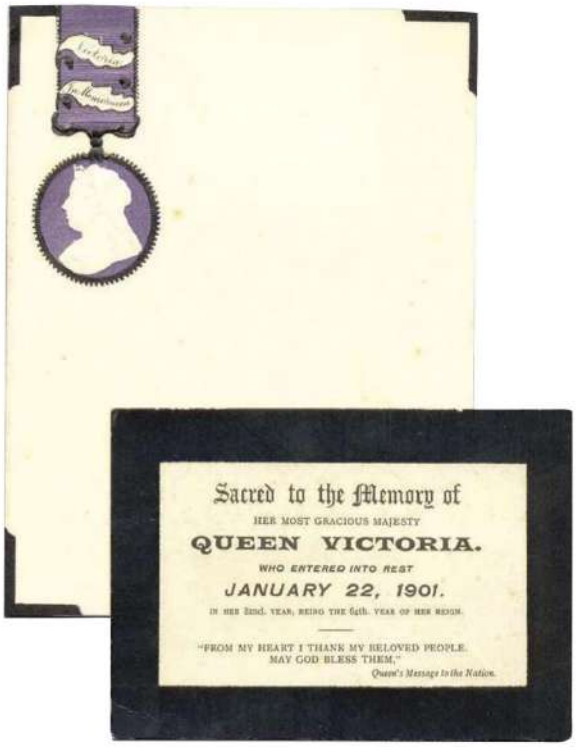
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The queen's coffin is carried up the steps of St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle for the funeral service





ABOVE **The funeral procession winds through the streets of Windsor from the train station to the castle**
RIGHT **Various souvenirs were produced to commemorate the queen's death, including this printed silk bookmark, embossed lettersheet and mourning card**

overlooking the route for 25 guineas (£3,000). In a fit of pique, the pope, "unwilling to be represented at the funeral of a Protestant Queen", refused to send a representative or allow an official mass to be said for the queen, while businesses demanded that the year of mourning be reduced, fearful of its effect on trade.

Meanwhile, information reached Gustav Steinhauer, a personal bodyguard to the kaiser, of an assassination plot by three notorious anarchists. They intended to kill the kaiser and Leopold II, king of the Belgians, during the funeral procession. Scotland Yard was informed.

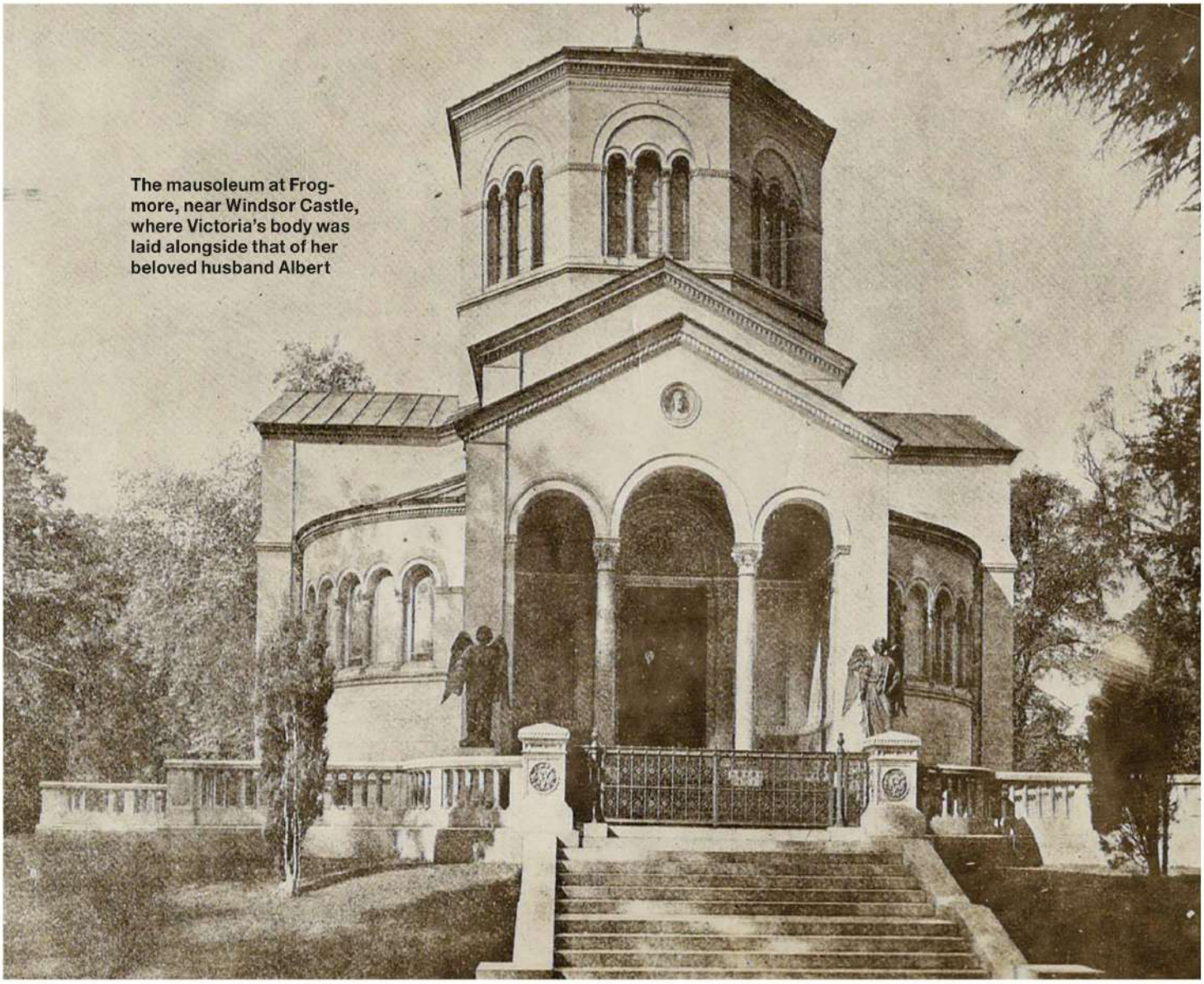
The funeral

On 1 February 1901, the cortège crossed the Solent from the Isle of Wight to Portsmouth. A line of battleships and cruisers stretched for 11 miles, each of them firing their 'minute' guns as the tiny yacht *Alberta* passed by, bearing the queen's coffin. The cortège remained in the harbour overnight and proceeded by train to London's Victoria Station in the early hours of 2 February. The coffin was then carried through Hyde Park to Paddington, accompanied by the largest military procession seen in Britain since the Duke of Wellington's funeral in 1852. The procession lasted two hours, the queen's coffin standing high on a gun carriage drawn by eight white and cream ponies through the crowded – yet eerily silent – streets.

138 bluejackets piled their arms, attached ropes to the carriage, and **dragged the gun carriage to St George's Chapel by hand**

Then came the final train journey to Windsor, where the coffin was again placed on a gun carriage. There was another moment of chaos when the horses, having been standing motionless in the freezing weather for some time, suddenly kicked and broke free from their traces, almost toppling the coffin to the ground. The front of the procession had already marched off and reached the end of Windsor Street before it could be stopped, and the Royal Horse Artillery were unable to re-harness

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The mausoleum at Frogmore, near Windsor Castle, where Victoria's body was laid alongside that of her beloved husband Albert

GETTY IMAGES

the horses: disaster loomed. Prince Louis Battenberg (grandfather of Prince Philip, the current Duke of Edinburgh) rescued the day, suggesting: "If it is impossible to mend the traces, you can always get the naval guard of honour to drag the gun carriage." Accordingly, 138 bluejackets piled up their weapons, attached ropes to the carriage where the harnesses had been, and dragged the gun carriage to St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle by hand, giving birth to a new royal tradition.

The service in St George's Chapel was also chaotic. The clerical procession, led by two archbishops, arrived an hour too early and had to stand patiently in the nave – which was half-empty as a result of a major blunder by the Earl Marshal. The earl's officials were seen dragging guests from their seats to spread them out in order to hide the mistake, while the uncooperative Lord Chamberlain tried to explain why he had requested that the women guests should come "in trousers".

The official service, though, was followed on 4 February by a moving ceremony for the family in the mausoleum the queen had built for her husband at Frogmore, close to Windsor Castle. King Edward VII and his six-year-old grandson, the future Edward VIII, knelt with the kaiser as the queen's coffin was slowly lowered into the crypt to lie in rest beside her beloved Prince Albert.

The funeral had cost a total of £35,500 – roughly equivalent to £4.5 million today.

As the *Westminster Gazette* later reported, the queen had outlived all the members of her Privy Council who were alive in 1837, when she ascended to the throne. Similarly, she outlasted all peers who had held their titles in 1837 (except Earl Nelson, who was 14 in that year), and all of the members who had sat in the House of Commons at the time of her accession.

In her 63 years on the throne, Victoria saw 10 prime ministers, five archbishops of Canterbury and six commanders-in-chief. There had been 18 presidents of the United States, 11 viceroys of Canada and 16 viceroys of India. France had been ruled by one king, one emperor and seven presidents of a republic. She had also outlived all nine of her bridesmaids.

"In a funeral at sea the ship is slowed down when the body is committed to the deep but once that has taken place there can be no waiting – the order is 'Full Steam Ahead'," the *Gazette* reported. "It is so with national affairs. Everything has been slowed down to do honour to our Queen, but the ship of state cannot tarry long. Full steam ahead is today's order — just because it can be nothing else." H

Stewart Richards is the author of *Curtain Down at Her Majesty's: The Death of Queen Victoria* (The History Press, 2018)

Lucy Worsley on... **our enduring fascination with Queen Victoria**

"Victoria acts as a lens. What you see in her and in her life will reveal a good deal about your own preoccupations"

Why do we still care about Victoria? Two hundred years on from her birth, the original global celebrity – and the goings-on of her enormous family – continue to intrigue. You can see it when Jenna Coleman portrays her in the latest ITV drama series, or in the massive media spectacle created when Victoria's three-times-great grandson married an American actress.

Partly the fascination is bound up with our ongoing prurience about the House of Windsor. Although she had a different surname, Queen Victoria was really the matriarch of the modern British monarchy. It was during her reign that the idea of a constitutional monarchy overseeing a two-party system emerged – a monarch without any cold, hard, head-chopping power, but with significant influence as a figurehead. Her monarchy, then, basically worked in the same way as it does today.

Coming to the throne in the wake of the first Reform Act, it was Victoria who was at the helm as the establishment, inch by contested inch, gave way to more democratic forces. In Britain there was no revolution, no single moment in which a modern political order was created; rather, it gradually created itself.

Victoria was the perfect monarch to preside over this process. At a time when thrones were falling in revolutions across Europe, she presented herself as an unintimidating, ordinary-looking – indeed, unimpressive-looking – woman, a devoted wife and mother.

She didn't threaten the self-confidence of the middle classes who held the balance of power in 19th-century Britain. She also – in a move of sneaky political brilliance – became the titular head of a vast and rapacious empire. How could such an institution, her people asked, be a violent, repressive force when at its head sat just a dear little old lady – a woman bereaved, who had suffered, who reminded them of their own grandmothers?

Her achievement was a near-century of strong and stable government at home. But the flipside was, of course, a difficult legacy: an empire that marched into, then withdrew from, a quarter of the landmass of the globe.

Victoria's voice was not often heard, but her subjects knew exactly what she looked like. Now that we live in an age of photography, we're used to the idea of encountering someone only through the medium of film. But it was Queen Victoria who first explored and embraced this modern technology for extending the 'soft power' of an individual or a nation. She dominated the print media through engravings, newspapers and then the photographic *cartes de visite* (little postcards) her subjects collected so compulsively. It's because she and her advisors exploited her image so comprehensively that we're still so familiar with her features to this day.

In terms of royal life, marriages and other doings of her extensive family set the tone for so much of what would follow in the 20th century. Victoria created ceremonies such as 'the royal wedding' and 'the garden party' that still exist today. It's as if Queen Victoria hovers at the shoulder of all her successors.

Her subjects created much of the physical world in which people in Britain still live. We're still Victoria's subjects, in the sense that we follow the Victorian game of football, and still post each other the Victorian invention of the Christmas card. We use the Victorians' public lavatories and underground railways, we benefit from the nursing profession, and we take the annual seaside holiday that they invented. We still enjoy their treats, too, from curry (one of Victoria's favourite foods) to chocolate Easter eggs and Bird's Custard.

Given her great and enduring popularity, then, what can possibly be left that's new to say about the queen? The sources for her life are both rich and well-mined.

However, what people thought of her, and what she meant to the wider world, are subjects that are increasingly interesting to cultural historians whose efforts are now taken just as seriously as those of political, economic or constitutional historians.

And even though the story is often told, some people will be coming to it for the first time in 2019. For those seeing her with fresh eyes, it's worth drawing out how she had to negotiate things that we care about today: celebrity, for example, or gender, or colonialism.

Someone like Victoria – one of the most instantly recognisable women in the history of the world – acts as a lens. What you see in her and in her life will reveal a good deal about your own preoccupations. In that sense, she's a once-and-future queen. H

Lucy Worsley is a historian, author, broadcaster and chief curator at Historic Royal Palaces. Her latest book is *Queen Victoria: Daughter, Wife, Mother, Widow* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2018)



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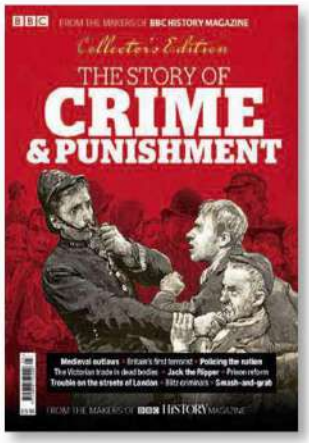
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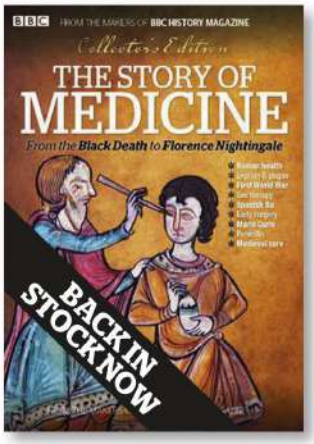
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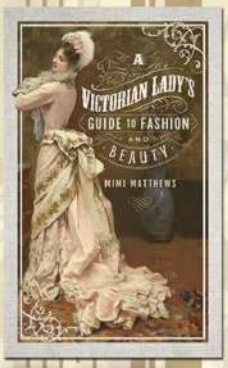
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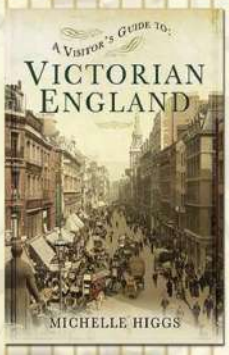
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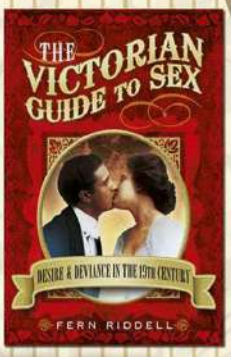
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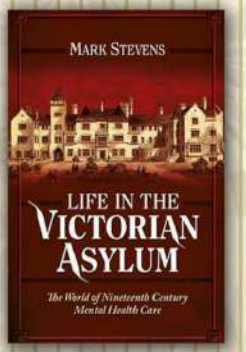
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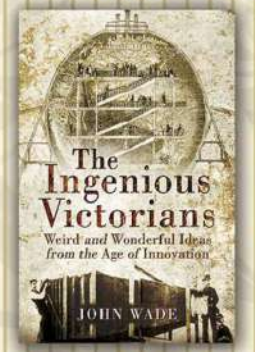
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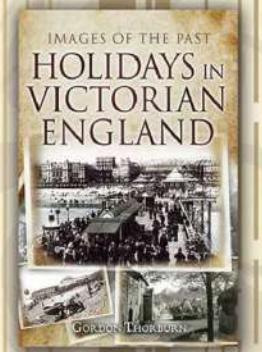
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